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THE TRAITOR GUIDE.

WAR PATH WILL

THE TRAITOR GUIDE

OR

THE BOY PHANTOM

BY
COL PRENTISS INGRAHAM

CHAPTER I.

A BOY'S RESOLVE.

"WHAT are we to do, now that our guide is dead, or a prisoner?"

The question was asked in an anxious tone, by a man whose head was gray, and who stood amid a group of half a dozen others.

It was a scene upon the prairie, a bivouac in a small piece of timber, from which the eye stretched far away across the rolling plain that seemed to be boundless upon all sides except toward the "land of the setting sun," where a bold range of mountains broke the outline.

It was a picturesque camp scene, there on the prairie, with the score of trees giving shelter to the emigrants westward bound, their dozen wagons and half a hundred horses staked out near by.

The shadows of night were coming on, and several fires were burning brightly, while about them were women and children, the former cooking the evening meal.

The group of men, before referred to, had walked apart from the others, when the elderly one of the party, and he who had spoken the words that open this story, had beckoned them to do so.

It was evident that all were anxious, for their faces showed it, and in response to the question asked them, one replied:

"God knows what we can do; but what news have you, Mr. Beckwith?"

Mr. Beckwith was the old gentleman referred to, and he was looked up to as the "captain" of the train.

"I have just this news," he replied, "and that is what Guy Marsden told me—which was that he came upon a place where there had evidently been a struggle of life and death, and found the guide's dead horse lying there, and the tracks of another animal leaving the spot."

"This looks bad for the guide, especially when he was to have been back last night," said one.

"Bad, indeed," resumed Mr. Beckwith—"for without him we are in danger of our lives if we keep on."

"I cannot understand why the guide left us yesterday morning, as he did," remarked one of the group, impatiently.

"Oh, his leaving was all right, for, knowing that we did not travel upon Sunday, he asked me to let him go off for the day to visit a ranchero and hunter, who, he said, lived some thirty miles from here."

"But he promised to be back last night, and as he had not returned this morning, young Marsden volunteered to look him up, and I told him to go, for, you know, the youth has passed two years out upon the plains."

"Yes, and it strikes me he is about as good a plainsman as the guide; but where is he?"

One of the party went in search of the youth in question, and found him looking after the comfort of his horse, which he had ridden all day in search of the lost guide.

He came toward the group of men with a quick, firm tread and said, pleasantly:

"You sent for me, Mr. Beckwith."

He was apparently about seventeen years of age, graceful, sinewy, and well formed for his years, and with the air of one who had perfect reliance in himself, young as he was.

He was dressed in fringed leggings, a blue-flannel hunting-shirt, a pair of top-boots, slouch hat and wore a belt of arms.

His face was bronzed by exposure, but he had long blonde, wavy hair, dark-blue eyes, and a complexion that was as pure as marble.

Certainly he was a very handsome boy, and his expression was winning, daring and resolute.

"Guy, I wish you would tell us just what you discovered to-day."

"Well, Mr. Beckwith, I took Warpath Will's trail to-day, as you requested, and followed it for a long way from here, when, upon the bank of a small stream, where the bushes grew thick, I found his horse, shot through the neck, and dead."

"There were traces upon the ground of a struggle, and I could see Will's boot-tracks, though the others were faint, and evidently made with a moccasined foot."

"More than one man's track, you thought, Guy?"

"Yes, sir—several, evidently, and without doubt Indians, or white men wearing moccasins."

"The saddle and bridle had been taken from Warpath Will's horse, and there were blood-stains about, which led me to know that he had been either killed or captured."

"So you think we need not expect his return, Guy?" asked one of the party.

"I do not expect him back, sir."

"Well, this is certainly a predicament for us to be in; within a couple of hundred miles of our destination, a wild Indian country ahead of us, and no guide," said Mr. Beckwith.

"I was going to offer my services, sir, if you cared to trust me," said the youth.

All started and looked at him.

"You have had some experience, I know, Guy, but I fear—"

Mr. Beckwith paused and the youth said:

"I have had just this experience, sir."

"I left home with my father just two years ago, when he got the gold-fever, and was with him in the mountains for more than a year."

"Then he struck the mine you have heard about, and sent me after mother and sister, and to settle up our affairs at home."

"I started with four men, and in an Indian fight we had on the way, three were killed and one wounded; but we beat the red-skins off and I remained with my wounded comrade until he died, which was three weeks."

"Then I came on alone, and reached home in safety, though on foot and alone, I was three months finding my way."

"I feel now that I can guide you to your destination, and thence take my mother and sister to where my father awaits us, so I make the offer to act as guide."

"I accept your services, Guy," answered Mr. Beckwith.

"But I do not."

"I will return to the starting-point and get a guide."

"You are game, Guy, but you don't know this country."

"No, we must have a guide who knows the prairies."

Such were the remarks of the different men of the group, and the youth's face flushed hotly; but he said simply, and in an indifferent way:

"You are at liberty to do as you please, gentlemen; but I shall continue on in the trail."

"Do you mean to say that you will carry your mother and sister to certain death?" asked one of the men.

"I mean to say that I have started upon this trail, and I shall continue it to the end."

"My father is waiting for us, my mother is in poor health, and I am anxious to get her on as rapidly as possible, and I shall start at daylight, with the train if you wish, but without it if you turn back," and the daring youth walked back to the spot where he had left his horse, leaving the group of emigrants to ponder over his offer and his determination.

CHAPTER II.

THE SEPARATION.

THE shades of night falling upon the prairie, found the members of the emigrant-train in earnest discussion.

The horses had been staked out for the night, guards had been placed to prevent a surprise, the supper discussed, and about the camp-fire of Mrs. Marsden those of the train were gathered who were not on duty, excepting the children, who had turned into their blankets for the night.

Mrs. Marsden, the mother of the youth whose resolve had so surprised the men about him, was a woman whose appearance indicated that she had been born and reared among refining influences.

She had loved a poor man, a trifle wild it might be; but her heart dictated her choice, and she had accepted her destiny, which was to find a loving husband, and be cast off by her family, who had intended to sell her for gold equal their own in value.

Guy Marsden and his sister Cleone were the fruits of this marriage, and they were twins.

Strangely alike, they were, too, in their appearance, both in face and form, and many had been the times, as little ones, they had not been known apart, even by their parents.

Though the husband of Mrs. Marsden had worked hard at his profession, which was that of editor upon a small paper, he had not been able to accumulate but little, and the health of his wife beginning to fail, he was determined to give her a change of air in the hope of benefiting her.

He had gotten together his little savings and gone to a Western town, hoping to secure employment there.

But luck was against him, and finding his money going fast, he determined to strike out with a party for the gold mines lately discovered in the Rocky Mountains.

Taking his son Guy with him, equipping himself as well as he could, and leaving for Mrs. Marsden and Cleone the balance of their savings, enough to support them half a year with economy, he set out for the gold country.

It was just one year and six months after his departure that he "struck it rich" one morning, or rather, Guy did, for he had discovered the vein of precious metal and called his father to his side.

Instantly Don Marsden knew that his fortune was made, and he started Guy at once to bring his mother and sister there to join them, for the climate was delightful, and he promised to have a comfortable home built for them by their return.

He had sent home little sums of money from time to time, so that the wolf had been kept from the door, and always had received cheerful letters from his wife; but one from Cleone had told him her mother was failing, and the doctor had prescribed mountain air.

"The very place for her, Guy, and you must make her most comfortable on the way."

"You have the dust to fit out well for the trip, so leave nothing undone, and in the mean time I will pay the boys to help me build a cabin worthy of those I love so dearly."

"I would go myself, but you know the boys have not been lucky, and in spite of all they would take my mine from me, for they do not like our coming off here alone, so far from camp."

"Now don't let anything delay your coming back, and bring your mother at all hazards at once, for something tells me, my son, she will not be spared long to us."

Such had been the instructions of the miner to his son, and thus it is that the reader finds them on the way to their destination, and brought to a standstill by the loss of their guide.

They had joined the western-bound wagon-train at Kansas City, and intended to remain with it until reaching Denver, its destination, when Guy had secured the services of Warpath Will, the guide, to conduct them on to the gold region where his father awaited them so anxiously.

As they now sat about the camp-fire, it was evident that the Marsdens were really alone in their determination to go on their way without a guide.

Mr. Beckwith alone of the others sided with them, but he was overruled by the majority, and said at last:

"Well, Guy, I am in favor of going on with you as our guide; but of course I am but nominally the leader, and must yield to the majority, so all will get ready to start back in the morning, to a point where we can secure a competent person to take us on our way."

All looked at Guy Marsden, and saw that he showed some annoyance at the decision; but before he could speak his mother said:

"I thank you, Mr. Beckwith, for your trust in my son, and will be sorry to part with you all, for you have made my way a pleasant one."

"What! do you mean that you will not return with us?" asked Mr. Beckwith, with surprise.

"Certainly, if Guy thinks it best for us to go on alone," was the quiet response.

Guy glanced toward his sister, and arose and walked off into the timber.

She understood his look and followed him, leaving the whole party urging her to remain with the train.

Cleone Marsden had been the life of the party, and to give her up would cause many hearts to ache and especially with several young men who had been her most ardent admirers.

She was a high-spirited, beautiful girl, with the form of a Venus and the nerve of a man.

She was devoted to her mother and brother, and looked up to the latter as she might have done to her father, in whose place she knew he then stood to them.

"Well, Guy, you called me?" she said as she approached him, where he stood out of earshot of those about the camp-fire.

"Yes, Cleone, I wished to ask you what it is best to do."

"Mother, as you know, is failing, and counts the days she will yet live, for she cannot believe that she will get well, and I believe that the hope of seeing father alone keeps her up."

"If we turn back it will kill her, for it will add several weeks more to our journey."

"From here on I know the way, as this is the trail father and I took out, and on which I came back alone, so we will not get lost, and I hope we will not meet any Indians."

"But if you say go back I will."

"I do not say so, Guy; for, with you, I believe mother would die under the prolonged disappointment."

"Then you are willing to trust to me as guide?"

"Willingly, brother."

"Thank you, Cleone; now go back and I will soon join you, and then these train people shall know just what I intend to do."

Five minutes after he again approached the camp-fire, and found the men and women alike trying to dissuade Mrs. Marsden from going.

"What do you say, my son?" she asked sorrowfully, as he sat down near her.

"How are you feeling, mother?"

"Not as well as I could wish, Guy."

"And do you wish to go on?"

"I do."

"We will start at dawn then, mother," was the firm reply.

"And you are willing, Cleone?" asked the mother.

"Oh yes, mother, for I have more confidence in Guy as a guide and defender, than in all the rest here, who have not had his experience upon the plains."

This dig made several of the young men wince, while Mr. Beckwith added:

in faith have I, Cleone; but the majority
 es, so back we go."

"And we continue on our trail westward,
 though I shall be sorry to part company," said
 Guy.

"Mrs. Marsden, it is madness for you to
 trust in that reckless boy," hotly said one of the
 party.

"I feel that I know best, Mr. Williams," was
 the quiet response, and nothing more was said
 to the invalid, longing to reach a haven of rest;
 but much comment was made away from the
 hearing of the Marsdens.

With the morning, the wagon, ambulance and
 stock belonging to the Marsdens, were divided
 from the rest of the train, farewells were said,
 and the brave mother and her two children
 wended their way westward, while the emi-
 grants took the back trail to seek another
 guide.

CHAPTER III.

THE GOLD-MINER.

A WILD wilderness of the Rocky Mountains,
 a scene of rare grandeur and intense solitude,
 break upon the eyes of a man who stands glanc-
 ing over the view spread out before him.

His steps have led him along a spur of moun-
 tain, and a well-worn path, through thickets
 and among the rocks he has followed, halting
 as it turns the edge of the spur and descends to
 the canyon bottom a hundred feet below him.

In the canyon is visible a small cabin, while
 upon a slope, not far distant, and near the
 bank of a pretty stream is another domicile in
 course of erection.

It is much larger than the other cabin, is laid
 out for four rooms, but is roofless.

The spot is a secluded one, far from any
 town, and the nearest neighbors are the deni-
 zens of a mining-camp thirty miles distant.

Down the valley, which the canyon opens
 into and where the little stream joins a river, is
 a deserted village, or rather mining-camp, a
 few miles from the cabin, and where, a year
 before a thousand hardy miners dwelt while
 they dug deep for gold, but with such poor
 luck that they became disheartened and moved
 away.

The man who alone remained was the one
 the reader beholds glancing over the scene in
 the canyon and valley.

That man is Don Marsden, whose brave boy
 went to bring his mother and sister to the land
 of gold, while the father toiled on hard to pre-
 pare for them a pleasant home, and also to dig
 from his mine all that he could of yellow dust
 to show them on their arrival.

He had indeed struck a fortune, and well he
 knew it, though his comrades in the mining-
 camp had jeered at him when he went to that
 region to search.

There were bad men in the camp, and he
 dared not make his success known, so kept the
 secret until he sent his son to bring thither the
 wife and daughter.

Then he sought the camp, to ask the aid of his
 comrades in building his new cabin, and to his
 almost dismay, found the place utterly des-
 erted.

In vain he searched the mines for those who
 had worked them, for not a human being could
 he find.

The log tavern, grocery, bar-rooms, all were
 deserted, and a pack of wolves were prowling
 through the desolate thoroughfares looking for
 refuse.

Often had the miners threatened to desert
 Lost Hope City, but Don Marsden had not ex-
 pected them to carry it out.

For a moment he seemed stunned by the fact
 that all were gone, and not one had sought him
 out to warn him of their departure.

He was a brave man, but it almost unnerved
 him to feel that he was there all alone, many
 miles from the nearest habitation.

Could he have his wife and daughter come to
 that land of solitude and loneliness?

Yes, for hidden away in the mountains was
 his fortune, and it must be dug to be enjoyed.

So he bravely set to work alone to build his
 cabin.

It was slow, tedious and hard work, but he
 meant to accomplish all that he could.

Early in the morning he arose, ate his frugal
 breakfast, and then sought his mine.

Until noon he dug for gold, and then set out
 for "home," and worked all the afternoon upon
 the new cabin.

At night, in his little hut, he made rude fur-
 niture for the "mansion," as he called the new
 cabin, and thus the days passed away until
 weeks rolled by, and three months had passed
 since the departure of Guy.

As he stood on the spur, looking down upon
 his home, the sun fell upon him, displaying a
 man of fine physique, and the face of one who
 possessed a noble nature and bold intellect.

Luck had been against him in the past, but he
 had not been conquered by ill-fortune, and now
 all seemed sunshine ahead.

"Three months to-day since Guy left, so I
 will not have much longer to wait," he said,
 musingly.

"I cannot finish the mansion without his aid,
 but I will do all that I can, and have the furni-
 ture ready, so that we can move in soon after
 their arrival.

"It will not be a palace, but it will be our
 own, and in a year's time the mine will pay
 us so well we will be rich, and can go elsewhere
 and live, and be rewarded for what we have
 suffered here.

"Ah! There comes a horseman up the
 valley.

"How strange it seems to see a fellow-being
 now, after three months having passed without
 setting eyes on one.

"I must hasten on to my cabin and be ready
 to greet him, be he friend or foe."

So saying, the miner took up his rifle, which
 leant against a tree near by, and continued on
 his way down the hillside.

In about five minutes time he reached the
 little cabin, crossing the stream upon a tree,
 which had been felled across it to serve as a
 bridge, and unlocking the door he entered.

The situation of the cabin gave him a view of
 the valley beyond the canyon's mouth, and it
 seemed to have been chosen as a position that
 could be readily defended against the approach
 of a foe.

Seating himself in the doorway, the miner
 placed his rifle ready at hand, and began to
 look down the valley, where he expected the
 horseman he had seen to appear in sight.

He had not long to wait, for soon a horse and
 rider appeared, the latter leaning far over, as
 though following a trail.

"He is on the trail from Lost Hope City—yes,
 he sees my cabin, and is coming this way," said
 Don Marsden.

The horseman now turned into the canyon,
 and came directly toward the cabin, his eyes
 having fallen upon its owner seated in the door-
 way.

"Can he bring me ill-tidings from those I
 love?" asked Don Marsden of himself, and the
 thought caused him to turn pale.

As the man approached, the miner saw that
 he was well-mounted, thoroughly armed, and
 was dressed in buckskin, while a large gray
 sombrero sheltered his head.

He was a man of thirty, perhaps, with a dark-
 ly-bronzed face, clear-cut features, not wholly
 prepossessing to the close reader of human na-
 ture, and with eyes that were black, full of ex-
 pression and restless.

As he advanced he made no hostile demon-
 stration, and neither did Don Marsden, who felt
 his advantage, should he prove a foe, in being
 in his own cabin.

"Well, stranger, are you astray in these
 mountains, or is Don Marsden the man you are
 in search of?" called out the miner, in a pleas-
 ant tone, as the other drew near.

"If you are Don Marsden, you are the man
 I am in search of, and I'm glad to get to the end
 of my trip," answered the horseman, as he dis-
 mounted and extended his hand.

"I do not think we have met before, com-
 rade, so what may I call you?" asked the
 miner.

"No, we have never met, pard; but my name
 is Warpath Will on the plains, and I know your
 kin."

"Hal! you know my wife and children, sir?"
 eagerly cried Don Marsden.

"I do, indeed."

"Pray tell me of them, and if harm has be-
 fallen them?" and the miner grasped the hand
 of his visitor.

"I left them two weeks ago, coming on slowly
 by train, and all were well; but your son, know-
 ing his time to return was up, told me to come
 on ahead and tell you that they were all right."

"God bless you, my man; but tell me of my
 wife's health?"

"She is getting along well, pard; but how is
 it the mining-village is deserted down the val-
 ley?"

"The miners deserted it on account of bad-
 luck, and just at the time I struck it rich up
 here."

"Yes, your boy said you had struck a for-
 tune; but you don't mean to say you are all
 alone?"

"Yes, for there is not a human being dwel-

ling within thirty miles of here, and you are
 the first man I have seen for three months."

"Indeed! But you will soon have company
 when your family comes, and I guess you have
 a snug little pile of dust laid up to welcome
 them?"

"I have, indeed, my friend, for my mine
 pays far better than my greatest hopes antici-
 pated; but you are tired and hungry, so I will
 get you some dinner, and then you can tell me
 all about those you come from, and who are all
 the world to me."

As he spoke Don Marsden turned to enter his
 cabin, when suddenly the stranger drew a re-
 volver from his belt, and leveling it full at the
 miner's back, pulled the trigger.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TREACHEROUS VISITOR.

THE dastardly act of the visitor was so
 wholly unexpected to Don Marsden, that, had
 the weapon gone off he would have been a dead
 man on the instant!

But the cap snapped, and it gave him time to
 turn before his foe could a second time cock
 and fire the pistol.

His rifle and belt of arms were not within
 reach, and he saw that the best thing to do was
 to spring upon the man and struggle with him
 for the mastery.

As he bounded forward the second time did
 the intended assassin pull trigger.

But fortunately again the cap failed to ex-
 plose, and, with a bound, Don Marsden faced
 his enemy at arm's length.

What the result of the combat would have
 been, for the two were both powerful men, had
 they clinched in a death-struggle, no one could
 tell, for, by dealing Don Marsden a crushing
 blow on the head, with the barrel of his re-
 volver, the murderer saw him sink at his feet ap-
 parently dead.

"I'll end you at once, Don Marsden," he
 muttered savagely, and raising the form in his
 arms he carried it down to the river-bank and
 tossed it into the stream, the swift current bear-
 ing it away from sight.

Without a glance at the whirling form of the
 man he had come there to kill, the murderer
 returned rapidly to the cabin.

His first act was to look to the welfare of his
 horse, which he staked out up the canyon, where
 an animal belonging to the miner was grazing.

Then he went back to the cabin and at once
 began a regular search of its every corner and
 hiding-place.

Private papers were unearthed, the [hiding-
 place of the gold-dust was found, and con-
 siderable treasure lay before the bold robber.

Then he took the trail, so readily followed,
 leading to the mine.

At last he came to it, after a walk of nearly
 a mile, and his eyes sparkled, and an exclama-
 tion of delight burst from his lips, as he realized
 its value.

There in large letters, painted upon the stone
 he read:

"This mine is the property of Don Marsden of
 Lexington, Kentucky, and of his heirs.

Hands off, pards, under penalty of frontier law.
 "DON MARSDEN, Miner."

"It is my mine now, Don Marsden, for I con-
 stitute myself your heir," muttered the man in
 grim tones, and he turned away on the trail
 leading back to the cabin.

Arriving there he noticed how the poor miner
 had worked, for the comfort of those whom he
 had expected soon to be with him.

Then he went after his horse, locked up the
 cabin, put the key in his pocket and rode away.

An hour's ride brought him to Lost Hope
 City, a village of shanties situated in a valley,
 under the mountains' brow.

It was as drear and desolate as a graveyard,
 for not a human being was visible, and about
 the trails, for they were such, rather than
 streets, wolves were prowling undisturbed.

The sun was just sinking behind the moun-
 tain-tops, and knowing that darkness would
 soon follow, the horseman decided to remain
 there all night.

He selected the most comfortable looking of
 the cabins, and dashing the door in with a kick,
 entered.

A rude bedstead, table, shelves and a couple of
 chairs were the furniture of the hut, and in one
 end was a large fire-place.

In this the man soon had a cheerful fire burn-
 ing, and then he cut a quantity of grass with
 his knife, and stabled his horse in an adjoining
 cabin.

A mountain deer, he had shot on his way
 down the valley, was dressed and choice bits
 placed upon the coals, and night having fallen,

the lonely occupant of the deserted village, closed the door and settled himself down to sleep.

But hardly had his eyes closed, when the loud and dismal hoot of an owl caused him to start to his feet.

He drove the bird of ill-omen away from the roof, where it had perched itself and again sought his rude couch, when once more melancholy notes were heard.

Cursing the owl he arose and shot it, and had hardly re-entered the cabin, when its mate turned up in a most dismal way.

In vain he sought rest, and rising once more, fired at the other bird, but missed it.

Then the long-drawn-out howl of the wolf was heard, and next the petulant yelp of the coyote.

"Curse this place! the souls of the miners who died here seem to haunt the place in the bodies of wolves and night-birds," growled the man who had called himself Warpath Will, as he once more tried to get to sleep.

At last the sounds seemed to grow fainter in his ears, as slumber deadened his senses, and he had lost consciousness in sleep, to suddenly spring to his feet, as shriek after shriek rung through the deserted camp.

In an instant the hooting owls, howling wolves and yelping coyotes were silenced.

Like a statue stood Warpath Will, the light of the flickering fire on the hearth showing him to be very pale.

"It is a panther, or a mountain lion," he said, as the shrieks continued.

Going to the door he looked out, and the sounds grew louder and louder.

The night was very dark, and a drizzling rain had set in, making the scene without dismal in the extreme.

But still that wild, unearthly shriek continued, growing louder and louder, as the one who uttered it came nearer and nearer.

With frightened yelps the wolves and coyotes fled, the owls flapped their heavy wings and flew hooting with fright away, and with a cry that showed how terror-stricken he was Warpath Will grasped up his blankets and rushed to the next cabin where his horse was moving nervously about, also seemingly impressed by the wild cries.

Throwing the saddle and bridle upon him with hot haste, he darted out of the cabin with the cry:

"The place is haunted."

Through the deserted camp he rode with the speed of the wind, while behind him rung fainter and fainter the unearthly cries that had so startled him, and caused him, brave man that he was, to fly from what he believed was a being of another world, while he murmured again and again:

"Heaven have mercy upon me, if my life is to be haunted like this for my crime."

CHAPTER V.

THE WOLF IN LAMB'S WOOL.

If Mrs. Marsden had felt any doubt of the capabilities of her brave son, as a guide, they disappeared as soon as she had been on the trail a couple of days, wholly under his charge.

He seemed to know exactly where lay the best roadways, so that she would not be shaken up badly, timed his halt for noon in such a way, that some cool spring, or rivulet was reached, with refreshing shade to lie beneath, and good grass for the stock, while his camping-places were certainly charming spots, and as safe as was possible under existing circumstances.

The best game he shot for food, and he cooked in a way that gave a relish to all she ate.

Their "outfit" consisted of one stout wagon, drawn by two mules, and an ambulance with a couple of fine horses, with several led riding-animals behind.

Guy had wished to hire a man to drive, but Mrs. Marsden said that she would take care of the ambulance, and Cleone volunteered for the mule wagon, leaving the youth to lead the way on horseback and look after the party generally.

Upon easy roads, Cleone would frequently leave her team to follow after the ambulance, while she mounted her horse and rode with her brother.

Of course, they missed the company they had had with the train, and the nights seemed very lonely to them; but Mrs. Marsden was cheered by the thought that each day brought them nearer to their home, and she hoped against hope that she would then be able to recuperate her failing health.

She certainly seemed brighter, as the days passed, and one night, when they camped in the hills, Guy said:

"Mother, you are improving fast, and I know you will continue to do so, for in four days more we will be at home."

"Heaven grant it, my son; but somehow, to-night, there is a shadow upon my heart, as though some dread evil were going to befall us."

"Oh, no, mother; your thoughts are impressed with gloom because I showed you the graves on the way back of my comrades, who were killed when I was on my way to you."

"No, no; all looks bright to me now, for we have passed through the Indian country, which I dreaded, and if we meet any one in the mountains they will be miners."

"Or road-agents," suggested Mrs. Marsden, whose mind was filled with stories of the cruelties of the Road-agents of the Overland.

"We have little to tempt road-agents, mother, for they do not care for household effects."

"But will father not be surprised and delighted at our purchases for housekeeping?"

"I declare, we can make our home most comfortable with what we have, and there is a lone spot near for a garden and corn and potato patch, and for that I brought the plow, while our chickens will just be in clover when we let them out of their cage into the canyon."

"Then I will run down south after some beef cattle and cows, and our home will be complete, for it is no ordinary cabin that father intended to build, with the aid of the miners of Lost Hope City."

"I tell you, mother, we will be most happy there, and in a couple of years, at furthest, we will have dug a fortune out of the mine, and can return and hold up our heads among the wealthiest—so don't be blue."

Thus Guy ran on, painting the pleasures anticipated in their new home, and in listening to him both Mrs. Marsden and Cleone seemed to cast off a certain gloom that had come over them as they entered the shadowy mountain trail.

The fire burned brightly, the odors of broiling meats and steaming coffee filled the air, and the scene was picturesque and cheerful.

The ambulance and wagon formed half a square as a background, and a comfortable seat had been arranged for the invalid mother, while Guy and his sister cooked supper.

The stockmen were under the shelter of the hillside, staked out for the night, the tent was pitched, in which Mrs. Marsden and Cleone slept, and the camp scene seemed complete without an intruder, who just then rode up.

"Ho, Guy, how are you?"

"And you Mrs. Marsden and Miss Cleone?"

The words rung out on the night air, and the firelight fell full upon a horseman who had ridden near, his approach unheard on the velvety grass.

"The guide!" cried Mrs. Marsden, while Cleone said:

"Not dead!"

"Warpath Will as I live!" broke from the lips of the surprised youth, and springing to the side of the guide he grasped his hand.

Warpath Will looked pale and worn, and slowly dismounted from his horse, which Guy led away and staked out, while he said:

"You look used up, Warpath, so rest yourself, and Cleone and I will soon have supper ready."

"I am used up," said the guide, as Mrs. Marsden held out her hand, and then he grasped that of Cleone, though the maiden hardly offered hers.

"We deemed you dead, sir," said Mrs. Marsden.

"Indeed! I suppose my not returning to camp caused that belief."

"Did nothing befall you?" asked Cleone.

"Nothing, other than that I lost my way," was the hesitating reply, and both Mrs. Marsden and Cleone noticed the seemingly constrained manner of the guide in answering.

Just then Guy returned and said:

"Well, Warpath, I am glad to see you; but you gave us all a scare, when I went in search of you and returned with the news that I found your dead horse, and that you had evidently been killed, or captured by red-skins."

The man started, while Cleone said:

"The guide says that nothing had befallen him, Guy."

"I said that, Miss Cleone, not knowing Guy had trailed me, and to avoid giving your mother uneasiness," was the quick reply.

"Then I forgive the prevarication, sir," said Mrs. Marsden, with a smile, adding:

"As it was meant for a kindness to me; but tell us, please, what harm befell you?"

"I was attacked by Indians, madam, who killed my horse and made me prisoner; but, after some days' captivity I managed to make my escape, and returning to the camp where I left the train, found it gone."

"I saw that you had come this way, while the train had returned, so I followed your trail, wondering that you would have dared venture here alone."

"I felt I was equal to it, Warpath," replied Guy.

"I do not doubt it, Guy; but you must be on your guard now, for there is a foe here of whom you little dream," was the quiet response of the guide.

"Who is it?" asked Mrs. Marsden earnestly.

"Mormons, madam," was the response.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GUIDE'S OFFER.

WHEN Warpath Will made the remark as did, about there being Mormons to be avoided, and inferring danger to follow, Cleone could not but see a contradiction in his doing so, compared with his having told a falsehood a few moments before, about himself, as he said, not to worry her mother.

He had skipped very lightly over his capture, captivity and escape, and never having particularly fancied the man, she was ever ready to pick a flaw in his actions.

With the entire train, and especially with Guy, Warpath Will had been a great favorite, and his supposed death had been deeply mourned.

Why he had come on after them, from whom he would certainly get nothing for his services, as he had been hired by Mr. Beckwith, and not go back to the train, Cleone could not understand.

And yet, her heart hinted at the reason, for, more than once had the guide spoken of his love for her, but been repelled with coldness.

He was a striking-looking man, not rough as were the bordermen about him, and the young maidens of the train, excepting Cleone, had been flattered by his attentions.

But Cleone felt that there was something about the man that was mysterious, and, unable to fathom him she could not like him.

She knew well, at that time, that the Mormons were causing trouble in the West, and a party of them were to be avoided.

Many stories had she heard, around the campfires, of the cruel deeds of the Mormons, their having kidnapped women and children, and their merciless acts toward those who did not believe in their faith.

Taking many of these stories as false, yet enough was known to cause her to dread them, and feeling the blood recede from her own face, when the guide spoke of their being near, she glanced at her mother to see that she had turned deathly pale.

Instantly she said:

"We have nothing to fear from Mormons, sir, so why worry my mother by mentioning them?"

"No, Miss Cleone, there is nothing to fear, for I will guide you by a way that they will not find us."

"But, to be frank with you, it was because I knew that a Danite captain and his band had come this way, that I took your trail to warn you, instead of going back to the train."

"It was very kind of you, sir; but what are we to do?" asked Mrs. Marsden.

"I will make a scout to-night, and discover just where the Mormon band are encamped, and the best trail for us to take to avoid them."

"It is so kind of you, sir."

"No, Mrs. Marsden, it is my duty, for, unprotected as you are, as Guy and myself could do but little good, the Mormons would be only too glad to carry you and Miss Cleone off into captivity, and I do not doubt but that that is their object."

"God forbid!" ejaculated the poor invalid, and she fell back upon her couch of blankets, while her eyes turned anxiously upon Cleone, who sprang to her side and said:

"Mother, do not worry, for we have seen no Mormons as yet, and I believe we will not run into any danger."

Then turning to Warpath Will, she said severely:

"It was unkind of you, sir, to thus pain my mother."

"Sis, Warpath acted for the best, I am sure, for he wished to place us upon our guard," and he added, as his sister came to his side at a motion from him:

"I am confident that he knows more than he has said, and even now they may be upon our trail."

"Other, do not trust that man, for I feel he is treacherous."

"Oh, Cleone! I never heard you speak ill of any one before, and you surprise me."

"No, no, Warpath is as true as steel and all right, so don't insult him."

Cleone made no reply, and supper being served they sat down and partook of it.

But Mrs. Marsden ate very little, and Cleone seemed annoyed and was silent; but the guide and Guy did justice to the supper, and, when it was finished, the former started off on a scout, he said.

Guy followed him out of earshot of his mother and sister, and said:

"What do you know, Warpath?"

"You have heard of Captain Champion, the Danite?"

"Often, for he was the talk of our camps before I went East."

"Well, he is a terrible fellow."

"So it is said."

"He has a band of twenty men, and they have done a great many red deeds through the land."

"Yes, so men say."

"They are camped within three miles of you, Guy."

The youth started at this assertion, and said, quickly:

"Can this be true, Warpath?"

"Yes and more."

"What more?"

"They are on your trail."

"Well, they shall find me ready to defend those I love, for my poor mother is too ill to travel faster."

"I know you are brave, Guy, but you can do little, even with my aid, against Champion's band."

"I can do my duty, and then accept the alternative."

"No, Guy, I must be the sufferer, not you, and I will tell you what I will do."

"Well?"

"A Mormon regards his oath sacred, and if Captain Champion swears to you that he will do as you demand, he will keep his pledge to the letter."

"But I have no pledge to ask of him."

"Listen, Guy, while I tell you that Captain Champion is following you, because he believes that I am with you, as guide."

"Now he has had cause to know me, and has offered a reward for my head, as I have been the worst foe of himself and band."

"Now, Guy, I am a man that cares little for life; you are young, and life is before you, and then there are your mother and sister to look after, and your father awaiting your coming, as you have often told me about him."

"Well, Warpath, what does all this mean?"

"Just this; that you go to the camp of the Danites and offer to give me into their power, if they pledge themselves to allow your train to go on its way unmolested."

"Warpath, you don't know me, if you suppose I will save even my mother and sister by sacrificing you," was the hot reply.

"Guy, you do not seem to feel that the shock of capture will kill your mother, while your sister will be carried off to become a Mormon's bride, not to speak of you being killed by them."

"As you will be too."

"I hope not, for I believe there is a chance of escape for me, in fact I know it, as one of the band is my friend, I having saved his life."

"Besides, I am a man and must take my chances, and will do so."

"No, we must think up some other plan, Warpath."

"There is no other, and time presses."

"I know not what to do."

"Do as I say."

"If I was certain that you could escape?"

"I can."

"Then I accept your noble offer, but for the sake of my poor mother and sister."

"Tell me where the Danite camp is and I will go there, while you remain with my mother and sister."

"All right, Guy."

"Your sister does not like me, but this act of mine will prove to her that I am sincere I hope, and having told Guy how to find the Danite camp, Warpath Will saw him ride off on his mission of life and death."

CHAPTER VII.

THE GUIDE'S SACRIFICE.

GUY MARSDEN felt that he was certainly in a most unfortunate and perilous situation.

He knew well how cruel the Mormons were

said to be, to men and women alike, and it was his earnest desire to keep his mother and sister out of their power.

But to do this he must run the risk of sacrificing the life of the brave man who had offered himself as a hostage for them as it were.

"Well, I can only accept good Warpath's offer, and then do all in my power to rescue him from the Danites," he said as he rode along on his way to the Danite camp.

A ride of a league along the valley trail, brought him in sight of a camp-fire up a canyon, and thither he went.

Not wishing to be fired upon, as it was likely he would be in the dark, he halted when within a hundred yards of the fire.

"Well, who are you?" answered a voice near, and it told Guy that he had already been seen by the sentinel on duty.

"I wish to see your captain, if this is the camp of the Danites."

"It is a Danite camp, and you will find the captain yonder."

"Dismount and leave your horse with me."

Guy quietly obeyed, and then walked on toward the fire.

As he approached he saw gathered about it a group of a dozen or more men, who were engaged in the various occupations of gambling, smoking and talking.

As Guy advanced the whole party sprung to their feet, their hands upon their revolvers, while one man, with a long beard asked:

"Well, sir, you are a stranger to us, so give an account of yourself."

"My name is Guy Marsden, and I am on the trail to the gold-mines, and learn that you are following me," was Guy's response.

"How know you this?"

"It matters not, but I know it, as I do that this is the Danite band of Captain Champion."

"Well, granted, what then?"

"Why do you follow my trail?"

"You are our foe."

"I have never harmed you."

"No, but may do so, and your plunder will come in well for us."

"Ah! you are robbers then; but can I not make terms with you?"

"What terms have you to offer?"

"Do you know a man who is known as Warpath Will, a scout and guide?"

"Well, we do, and would give much to capture him."

"Suppose I promise to place him in your power?"

"We will pay you well for it, young fellow."

"Will you pledge yourself to allow me and my train go free, and unmolested to our destination?"

"If you give Warpath Will into our power?"

"Yes."

"I will pledge myself, yes."

"Are you Captain Champion?"

"I am."

"And you give me your pledge, by all that you hold sacred in the Mormon faith, to allow me and mine to go on our way unmolested?"

"I do."

"And your men?"

"I pledge myself for them."

"Then I will give into your power Warpath Will, upon one condition."

"Name it."

"That you will not harm him for thirty days from to-day."

"Why this condition?"

"I have a motive for it which I will not reveal."

"It is granted."

"Now how much will you take in gold to allow me to go on unmolested, and not deliver to you Warpath Will?"

"No sum that you can name," was the stern reply.

"Well, I will bring Warpath Will to your camp to-night."

"Do so, and you go on your way, young man."

Guy Marsden said no more but turned to go, when the one with whom he had spoken called out:

"Where is Warpath Will now?"

"It matters not where."

"Yes, for if he is in your camp, or near it, I will go with you along with two of my men, to bring him back, for I am well aware that you have only yourself to guard your train."

"Well, come on, so that you do not go nearer the camp than I wish," and Guy Marsden rode back down the valley accompanied by the three Mormons.

Arriving in sight of the fire, he bade them halt and rode on alone.

He found his mother and sister anxious about him, and Warpath Will striving to cheer them.

"Well, Guy, I told your mother you would be back all right; but what news?" called out the guide in a cheery tone.

"I could only arrange it, Warpath, as you suggested."

"That is all right, and I will go at once."

"Good-night, Mrs. Marsden, and when I see you again I hope you will be well."

"Good-by, Miss Cleone," and the guide arose.

"Did you tell them?" asked Guy.

"Oh no, of course not."

"Well, I will—"

"No! no! Guy, you had better not," and unheeding Mrs. Marsden's question why he was going, the guide walked away accompanied by Guy.

The three Mormons sat on their horses awaiting their approach, and, as Warpath Will halted before them, leading his horse, the Danite leader said:

"Ha! ha! ha! it makes my heart glad to see you, Warpath Will."

"I do not doubt it, Captain Champion; but you would not have me for your prisoner if I did not give myself up to save my friends."

"It matters not what the motive, we have you, and shall hold you fast until we can kill you."

"A threatened man lives long, Danite," said the guide.

"All right, but we have you now."

"Bind him, boys."

Two of the horsemen sprung to the ground and quickly secured the guide, and with a sad heart Guy Marsden turned away, and upon reaching camp told his mother and sister just what he had done.

"Heaven bless that noble man," fervently cried Mrs. Marsden, while in a low tone, broken by sobs, Cleone said:

"God forgive me for wronging him as I have in thought, for I have ever doubted him."

"But, brother!" and her eyes flashed, "he shall not die by their hands, for, as you have the Danites' pledge to spare him for thirty days, in that time we can rescue him."

"That is just what I intend to do, Cleone, and it was the belief that I could do this that caused me to accept poor Warpath as a sacrifice."

"Well, I will aid you, Guy, for, having wronged him as I have, I will make amends by my endeavors to save him," said the noble girl.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MIDNIGHT FLIGHT.

UNTIL late in the night Guy Marsden and his sister sat by the camp fire, discussing their situation, and getting from it what comfort they could.

Both of them fully realized the critical condition of their mother, for they remembered her as she had been a year before, beautiful, strong and cheerful.

Now they beheld her a wreck of her former self, and with little strength.

Suddenly a voice came out of the darkness:

"Hello!"

Guy started and went in the direction from whence came the sound, his rifle in his hand.

Mrs. Marsden had retired, and Cleone stepped to the tent-flap to see if she, too, had heard the voice.

"What is it, Cleone?" she asked.

"Brother has gone to see, mother, for some one called to him."

"Oh, that we were safe at home, if that home be in the wilds," sighed the woman, wearily.

Just then Guy came back to the camp-fire; but he was not alone, for a small man, with long hair and bushy beard, accompanied him.

The man had an evil face, and was armed to the teeth, for he carried four revolvers in his belt.

He bowed and grinned at sight of Cleone and said:

"Yer sarvint, miss, and I hopes I see yer."

Cleone did not like the visitor but bowed coldly, while Guy remarked:

"Cleone, this gentleman says that he is the friend of Warpath Will, and that he comes on an important errand to us."

"Yas, miss, I are Pistol Pete, as ther boys calls me, 'cause I carries so many revolvers," said the stranger in a cringing sort of way.

"And you come from the guide?" asked Cleone.

"Yas, and no, miss; but I comes ter sarve yer."

"Yer see Warpath Will hev got ther irons on him, and I belongs ter ther band thet hes him; but he hev befriended me in ther past, and I'll not desart him now.

"But yer see, though ther cap'n give yer brother here his pledge, and will stick to it, ther men don't like it, and some of 'em is goin' ter make a raid on yer camp to-night, fer they knows they kin sell miss at a good sum up at Salt Lake, and ther booty o' yer outfit here will be worth suthin', so I jist detarmined ter skip over, arter talkin' ther matter over with Warpath Will, and tell yer ter mount yer horses and git along jist so quick as ever yer can.

"I hopes yer understand me, miss, you and ther young pard?"

They did understand him but too well, and that it meant nothing more than a midnight flight on horseback, for they could not carry their teams.

"Brother, what is to be done?" asked Cleone sadly.

"Go," was the simple reply.

"But mother?"

"She will ride your horse, and I will pack another animal with all we can carry.

"Come, we must lose no time," and turning to Pistol Pete Guy continued:

"It is very kind of you, sir, to come and warn us."

"Yas, but I did it fer Warpath, and w'u'd git my neck inter a noose ef it were known what I hes done.

"Yer see I were appointed his guard ter-night, but I slipped off ter tell ye."

"And we are indeed most thankful to you," answered Guy, slipping into the man's hand a bank bill.

Pistol Pete made no acknowledgment of the gift, but set to work to get the horses, while Cleone aided her mother to get ready and Guy made up the pack for the led animal.

In a very few moments all was in readiness for the start, and Pistol Pete having gone, Guy placed himself in the lead with the pack horse, and Cleone and her mother followed, riding side by side.

As they rode away into the gloom the sound of hoofs was heard back in the valley, and the voices of men in loud angry tones, above which came the cry:

"They have gone!"

"Come, we must push on, mother, if you can stand it, though they cannot follow our trail to-night, and we will thus have five hours' start, and that will save us," said Guy hopefully.

It was evidently an effort for Mrs. Marsden to ride, but she did so without a murmur—and thus the flight was continued through the mountains, Guy unerringly leading the way by the trail which he had taken months before.

At daylight they halted for breakfast and rest for half an hour, and with a great effort, Mrs. Marsden again mounted for the flight.

Thus the morning passed, and another halt was made in the afternoon.

Cleone had observed Guy pass several nice spots, where would have been a good camping-ground, and wondered why he did so.

At last he turned into a canyon that was wild in the extreme, and the bed of it was but a shallow stream.

Up the bed they went for half a mile, the precipitous sides of the canyon rising far above them, and suddenly came to the end against a massive wall of rock.

A tree grew here, its branches towering above the top of the cliff, and its base washed by the rivulet.

"Mother, on my way out I camped here for two days, and climbing that tree I found a deserted cabin back on the hill.

"Now I can plainly see that you are not able to go further without a good rest, so I will now go up the tree with my lariats, and pull you up after me, and Cleone too, and leave you in the cabin while I go after father.

"The stream-bed will leave no trail of our having come up here, and I will take the horses on with me, so that, if we are followed, they will keep on after their trail, and you and sis will be perfectly safe until my return, which will be in a couple of days at furthest."

Mrs. Marsden's lips quivered, but she answered bravely:

"My son, whatever you do, I know that it is for the best."

"Yes, Guy, and let us lose no time; but can you draw us up to the cliff?" asked Cleone, looking up at the dizzy height.

"Easily, for whoever dwelt in the cabin made a windlass at the top for drawing up game and wood, and I can use it."

Taking the several lariats he made them into

a line, and tying one end about his waist, began to climb the tree.

It was a long and hard struggle, but at last he reached a limb along which he walked and stepped out upon the cliff.

There was an old windlass and a roller over the limb of the tree, which would prevent the rope from wearing.

Making one end of the lariat fast, Guy called down to his sister that all was ready, and Cleone, having taken the pack from the led horse, made it fast to the lariat.

It went up easily, and the end was thrown back, and Cleone made a swing for her mother to sit in, and which she could not fall out of should she lose her nerve.

Then Guy began to turn the windlass and up into the air went the invalid, Cleone encouraging her by cheering words.

She had nearly reached the top, in fact was up to the limb, when suddenly Guy glanced up and beheld an Indian almost upon him.

To let go the windlass would be to kill his mother by a rapid descent of over a hundred feet.

There was no way of making it fast, and no time; but the boy did not lose his nerve for an instant, and his revolver was at a level and his finger on the trigger in a second of time.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DESERTED CABIN.

NEVER in his life had Guy Marsden been in a more critical position, and never did he expect to be again, than when he stood there, his mother's, his sister's and his own life in his hands, with the huge warrior rushing upon him with uplifted tomahawk.

Hampered as he was by the windlass, which held his mother between life and death, and with the bounding red-skin almost upon him, the youth did not lose his iron nerve, but took a rapid and deadly aim, and fired.

"Take that, red-skin, and welcome," cried Guy as he touched the trigger firmly.

With the report the warrior gave a spring into the air, and a stifled war-cry issued from his lips as he fell his length upon the rocky ground, his tomahawk striking within a few inches of Guy's foot.

"Oh, mother!" the boy cried, as he saw that his mother's head had drooped forward.

Catching hold of the rope he made his way to the edge of the cliff and drew his mother upon it, after which he lowered the end rapidly for his sister.

Cleone had heard the shot, and was in an agony of suspense; but the rope coming down reassured her, and in a short while she too stood upon the cliff.

"Come, sis, we must now revive mother, for she has fainted," cried Guy, and he soon spread her couch for her by the side of the little cabin, which seemed to have long been deserted.

Then Mrs. Marsden was gently placed upon it, and soon returned to consciousness, though she seemed very feeble.

Guy then built a fire in the cabin, put things to rights, piled up plenty of wood at hand for his sister, and unpacked the bundle he had brought, so as to make his mother as comfortable as possible.

He had killed some game as they came along, and this was dressed for cooking, and a rifle and revolvers left for Cleone's use.

Then he took the body of the red-skin and lowered it rapidly to the canyon below, telling Cleone he would dispose of it on his way.

Bidding his mother and sister a hasty farewell, and promising to return soon with his father, he went down the rope to the canyon, and Cleone pulled it up after him and watched his departure, her eyes full of tears.

"Hurry back, Guy, for you know," she called out, and he understood her well, that their mother could not last long.

Throwing the dead warrior across the back of the led animal, Guy mounted his own horse and set off at a quick trot.

The other animals followed, and Cleone saw them disappear from sight with a sigh that was wrung from her heart at her perilous and sad situation.

Coming to the stream that wound through the valley, and having to cross it, Guy gave the dead warrior a watery burial by throwing him from the back of the horse, and then pressed on more rapidly.

Having had a rest of two hours the horses were able to keep up a steady and swift gait, and until far into the night Guy kept them at it.

Then he sought a camping-place, and was

soon fast asleep, utterly worn out as he was with his loss of rest and hard work.

The animal had good grazing, and seemed ready to start, when dawn came, and once more Guy pushed on, halting after a couple of hours for breakfast.

Changing from one horse to the other every hour, he was able to keep up a good speed, and did so.

Soon objects began to have a more familiar look to him, and he knew that Lost Hope City was not far distant.

At last the mining-camp came in view; but not a sign of life was visible, and, as Guy drew nearer he discovered to his utter amazement that the place was utterly deserted.

He drew rein in his astonishment and looked about him.

It certainly was Lost Hope City, but where were its miners?

In dismay he pushed on once more, and did not draw rein until he dashed up to the door of his own cabin.

To his horror it too wore a deserted look.

There was the "mansion" half finished, and his father could not be seen.

It seemed as though the place had not held an occupant for days.

Springing from his horse Guy ran off toward the mine at full speed.

It too was deserted, he discovered, as he stood panting before it.

Again he returned to the cabin, and his experienced eyes told him that there had been no fresh trail made to the mine for days.

Arriving at the cabin, his eyes fell upon blood upon the rocks in front of the door.

It was dried up, but still was blood.

Seizing a stone, he broke the padlock and entered the cabin.

At first all seemed there as he had left it; but soon he discovered that the secret recesses of the cabin had been robbed.

The boy fairly staggered under this shock and groaned:

"The miners have deserted their worthless claims near Lost Hope City, and have gone; but some of them, my father's foes, have come here before leaving, and perhaps killed, but certainly robbed him."

After a few moments the poor boy gained his self-control again, and then made a thorough search of the place.

At last he said slowly:

"If father had gone from here of his own free will, he would have left me some sign in the secret hiding-place we have.

"He has not done so, his papers are gone, his gold is gone, and I almost fear that he has been murdered.

"It will kill poor mother to know this; but I must return at once and bring her here, and then, if father is dead, do what I can to work the mine—if she lives.

"Ah me! this is a bitter, bitter blow; but Heaven grant that it does not fall heavier upon me still."

With this, Guy Marsden, his face pale and quivering, mounted his horse, and leading the others, started upon his return to the spot where he had left his dying mother and sister.

It was sunset as he left the cabin, and night had fallen before he reached Lost Hope City, and he gave an involuntary shudder at riding through the deserted town.

"There have been so many poor miners murdered there, and the place was so wicked, I almost feel as though I should see ghosts in the streets," he muttered, as he rode into the deserted camp.

And, as he spoke, there suddenly broke out upon the still night-air a burst of most fiendish laughter which seemingly turned his heart to ice with dread.

CHAPTER X.

THE RETURN.

GUY MARSDEN was not of a superstitious nature; but he was young, and his past experience among the miners had led him to regard the supernatural as not improbable.

His father had kept him at his studies, teaching him at night in their little camp, and endeavored to do away with all the harm the miners' stories might implant in him, and with considerable success.

Still the youth held an idea that there might be such a thing as the spirit of the dead prowling the earth, and, impressed by all that had occurred during the past few days, he took this view of the matter, and set his horses to flight.

Through the deserted mining-camp they went at full speed, the hoofs of the horses awaking

by echoes along the hills, and the almost childish laughter resounding behind them.

Finding that he of the mocking laughter did not give chase, Guy drew rein after he had kept up his rapid pace for a mile, and went along more slowly.

He did not care to camp, and kept his horses going until midnight had long passed.

Then he came to a halt in a patch of rich grass, and after staking them out to feed upon it, threw himself down to rest.

He was very tired and soon fell into a deep sleep, from which he did not awaken until the sun arose.

Then, to his horror, he saw that he did not have a single horse.

The whole four had mysteriously disappeared.

They had not pulled their stakes up, that was certain, for the saddles and bridles, laid near each one, were gone too.

Then the certainty came to Guy that they had been stolen.

For a moment he seemed almost in despair; but his nature shook off the feeling that was creeping over him, and he at once set out to see if he could follow their trail.

This he readily did for a short distance, and then the trail merged into four, going in as many different directions.

Again was the boy brought to a standstill.

He knew not what to do.

His dying mother was awaiting his coming, and yet he must return on foot, without the means to aid her to their cabin, and perhaps the news he had to tell her, about the mysterious disappearance of his father, would kill her at once.

Still his duty was to return, and that as soon as possible.

So he again shouldered his rifle and set off on the trail back to where he had left his mother and sister.

It was a hard, long walk, but he went on untiringly, pausing now and then for a drink of cool water from a rivulet, or for a rest of a few minutes.

Night came on and found him on the way, and until late he held on, and then halted from sheer necessity, as he was worn out.

A bath in a brook refreshed him, a few hours' sleep, the sleep of the utterly weary, rested him, and before daylight he was again on the trail.

As he was on foot he knew that it would be nearer for him to follow the valley to the canyon which led up to the cliff, on which he had left his mother and sister, than to go around the mountain range to the spot.

So he continued on down the valley, and by noon entered the canyon, nearly the whole of which was the bed of a shallow stream.

Straight through the water he went until he reached the foot of the tree, when he gave a loud hallo.

No answer came, and again he hailed.

Still no answer from above.

His face became very pale, and then he called out:

"Cleone! oh, Cleone!"

Still no answer.

He was very tired, but determined to at once climb the tree, and accordingly began the hard and perilous ascent.

Weighted as he was, with his belt of arms, and rifle slung at his back, it was no easy task, and he was surprised to find how much heavier it was to accomplish than it had been on the former occasion.

But hope and dread urged him on, as he knew not the fate of the loved ones he had left in the little cabin on the cliff.

Several times he was compelled to pause, and clinging hard, get such rest as he could.

At last the limb was reached, and he said to himself:

"Ten feet higher up and I never would have reached it."

Boldly he walked out and sprung to the cliff, and then his strength utterly failed him, his knees gave out, and he sunk down prostrated.

There he lay for some time, seemingly unable to move, while he kept his eyes upon the little cabin in the background.

The door was closed, no smoke came from the chimney, and the place had the look of being utterly deserted.

At last he was sufficiently rested to rise to his feet and he hastened toward the cabin.

"Mother! Cleone!" he called as he advanced; but no reply greeted him.

Opening the door softly he looked within.

The cabin held no occupant.

There was nothing to indicate either, that any one dwelt there.

Stepping to the hearth he felt the ashes.

It was cold, and he knew that no fire had been there at least since the day before.

Out of the cabin he fairly staggered, groaning:

"My poor mother and sister, what has become of you?"

Like one dazed he looked about him, and then his eyes fell upon something beneath a distant tree which caused him to start and fairly quiver.

With a cry of anguish the brave boy rushed toward the tree and dropped upon his knees by the side of a new-made grave.

CHAPTER XI.

A CAPTIVE.

FOR some moments the poor boy knelt by that new-made grave.

Something told him that one he loved lay therein.

Which one, his mother or sister, he could not tell, yet he believed that it was the former.

Bitterly he repented having left the overland train; but he had acted for the best, as he believed.

His father mysteriously disappeared, perhaps killed, his mother and sister gone, one of them certainly dead, their train given up, his horses stolen, and himself afoot, alive, and to bear all that was upon him, was seemingly more than human nature could stand, and the noble boy bowed his head and seemed crushed by grief.

But his nature was one to surmount all difficulties, to rise up against defeat and sorrow, and entering the cabin, he looked about for something to serve as a shovel, with which to throw the earth out of the grave, that the dread secret of who the occupant was might be revealed to him.

He found there a pick, spade and shovel, which showed that the cabin had evidently once been the home of a miner.

Seizing the latter, he returned to the grave and went to work with a will.

Deeper and deeper he dug, until at length he worked more gently, for he knew that he was near the body.

A few moments more and he came to a blanket.

This he leant over and drew aside, and starting back, he cried piteously:

"Yes, it is my poor mother! The outlaws have slain her and buried her here."

"But I shall avenge her!"

For many long minutes he stood gazing down at that serene, upturned face, which he loved so well, then with a sigh he replaced the blanket tenderly, and began the sad task of filling up the grave again.

He had worked but a short time when he suddenly turned, and as though from instinct, for he had heard no sound.

There, within a dozen paces of him, he beheld three rough-looking men, while in the background, seated upon their horses, were a dozen more.

The three nearest him had dismounted and left their horses with their comrades, and now stood, each with a pistol in his hand, and their eyes fixed upon him with a look of mischief.

A man would under such circumstances have thrown up his hands in token of surrender, when he saw the odds so against him—at least, not one man in a thousand would have thought of resistance.

But not so with the boy, for he was driven to reckless despair.

His rifle lay upon the cliff, where he had sunk down exhausted, but his belt of arms hung upon the tree that sheltered the grave.

The tree was a large one—a pine—stunted in its upward growth, but with a large trunk and spreading limbs.

It stood upon the edge almost of the precipice, growing in a crevice of the rocks, and provided a good protection.

With a bound the boy reached its shelter, grasping his belt of arms as he did so, and followed by three shots from the men.

Two of the shots knocked the bark from the tree, and the third pierced his hat.

The three men started at once to run upon him, when, turning quickly and drawing a revolver, Guy dropped the one nearest with a bullet in his brain.

This sent the other two flying to cover, while their comrades in the background laughed loud and rudely at their retreat.

"Well, what do you want?" called out Guy, in a firm voice.

"We wants you, boy, and we intends ter have yer," was the answer of one of the men from behind a neighboring tree.

"Well, come and get me," was the defiant response.

"We intends ter."

"Who are you?"

"We is some of Captain Champ's band."

"I thought that I recognized your ugly faces; but where is your captain?"

"Gone to the city."

"What city?"

"Salt Lake."

"And do I owe it to you that my mother lies in that grave, and that my sister is gone?"

"Ask the captain."

"Well, if you want me, come on," was the nerry reply.

The horsemen in the rear had now ridden up, keeping the cabin between them and the youth, and one of them called out:

"Take the boy, Hank, and lose no time about it."

"Yas, take him as Ben thar did, and git tuk instead."

"Come and git him yerself, ef yer wants him," was the sullen reply.

"You don't mean to let him bluff you off?" called out the speaker, riding into view from behind the cabin.

"I don't mean ter let him make a stiff o' me, thet are sart'in, ef I are acquainted with myself."

"Nor does I," said the second one of the two valiants.

"Well, I'll see that a boy does not keep a dozen men at bay." And the speaker started to ride forward, when a flash came from behind the tree, and the horse ridden by the seeming leader plunged forward and fell dead, the bullet burying itself in his head, and thus saving the life of his rider.

"Curses on you, boy, I will have your life for that!"

"Come, men, follow me!" and the infuriated man sprung to his feet and rushed toward the tree, followed by the other two on foot, and the rest of the band on horseback.

It was a thrilling scene, the brave boy standing at bay, half-hidden by the tree, and with barely room enough upon the edge of the precipice, to keep him from dashing downward a hundred feet to death, while half a score of men, on foot and mounted, were rushing upon him.

"Back all of you, for I shoot to kill, and will not surrender," cried the boy in a voice that did not quiver.

"Do not kill him! take him alive!" yelled the leader, and the crowd darted toward the tree.

Guy realized his full danger, but he did not lose his nerve, nor fire at random, for his next shot brought down a foe, and the one following dropped a horse, who threw his rider with a force that stunned him.

As he raised his revolver to fire at the leader, that worthy dropped into the open grave, and the bullet broke the arm of the man Hank, just behind him.

Before he could fire again, the men were upon him, he was dragged from behind the sheltering tree and hurled to the ground.

A moment more and he lay bound securely, a captive to a band he had every reason to fear would take his life.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MIDNIGHT MESSENGER.

As he lay upon the ground before his captors, Guy Marsden saw among the faces which he had seen in his visit to the camp of Captain Champion, whom his men called "Cap'n Champ," and who had still further become known as "Red Champion the Mormon."

Guy was not hurt physically, though he had been somewhat rudely handled, and yet mentally he suffered untold agonies.

He remembered Warpath Will in the hands of those very men, and whom he had intended to rescue.

He recalled his visit to the deserted cabin of his father, and now lay near the still open grave of his mother, while his sister's fate was unknown to him.

What his enemies intended to do with him, he could not conjecture, yet there were dark looks turned upon him.

He had killed two of their number, dismounted two more, and one now sat near groaning from a broken arm, and bitterly cursing him with every twinge of pain he suffered.

After having him secure the leader had ordered a fire built and supper prepared, while their horses were staked out on the mountain-side.

Then the arm of the wounded man had been rudely dressed, and next the dead members of the band had been buried back of the cabin,

while the grave of Mrs. Marsden was still left open.

The shadows of night soon crept over the scene, and the men sat down to their supper.

Guy's feet were left secured, but his hands were unbound, and he was placed by the fire with the remark:

"Better eat hearty, boy, for it is your last meal."

In spite of his sorrow, suspense, and almost hopeless condition, Guy did eat heartily, for his eye was upon any chance of escape, and he wished to keep up his strength.

"Do you know who murdered my mother?" he asked of the man who appeared to be acting as leader, and who was a gaunt, cadaverous-faced fellow who had the look of an itinerant parson.

"Was she murdered?"

"Yes."

"You know that?"

"I feel it, and wish to know who did it?"

"Ask the cap'n."

"He is in Salt Lake, you say?"

"Yes, he has gone there."

"And where is my sister?"

"Ask the cap'n."

"He knows?"

"I guess."

"And what has become of Warpath Will?"

The men looked at each other and smiled, while the leader said again:

"Ask the cap'n."

"Your captain seems to know everything," sneered Guy.

"Guess he does."

"And do you know what you intend to do with me?"

"Yes."

"You will not have to tell me to ask the captain to find out?"

"No."

"What will be my fate, then?"

"You will be killed," was the cool reply.

Guy's face paled, but he did not show a tremor of fear.

He drooped his eyes for a moment and then said:

"How have I harmed you?"

"Ask the cap'n."

"Does he mean that I shall die?"

"Yes."

"And you came here to seek me?"

"Yes."

"When will you kill me?"

"Almost any time: here, Doc, tie him up again," said the leader, and Guy found himself once more secured and left lying by the fire.

One by one the men rolled themselves in their blankets and lay down to sleep, while one shouldered his rifle and went off, along the spur to stand guard.

Guy could not sleep.

It would have been a mercy to him if he could have done so.

The moans of the man he had wounded rung in his ears, as the wretch tossed in his sleep.

The graves of those he had slain were in the circle of the firelight, and the open grave of his poor mother was but a few paces distant from him.

What fate had befallen his sister he did not know, and whether Warpath Will was dead or alive he could not tell.

His father might be dead, or living, might be suffering agony as a captive to the Indians or Mormons, while his own fate hung in the balance, and was at the mercy of men who seemed to have no mercy in their hearts.

Suddenly Guy heard a challenge off along the spur.

The guard had evidently halted some one.

An answer was given, and then two persons approached the cabin, one on foot the other mounted.

The horseman was Pistol Pete, as Guy saw at a glance.

He dared not show any recognition of him, as he approached the camp-fire, but watched him closely.

"Ho, pards, yer has ter be up and slopin', fer I has orders from ther cap'n ter bring yer at all speed," called out Pistol Pete.

The men sprang to their feet hastily and the leader asked:

"What's up, Pete?"

"I dunno, but you is wanted, and immediate, so let's be off."

"Got any cold grub around, thet I kin chaw on while yer is gittin' saddled up?"

"Yes, there is some, help yourself," and the leader pointed to the remnants of the supper, and Pistol Pete helped himself with the air of a hungry man, while the rest of the band began to get ready to depart.

"Hello, who is you?" asked Pistol Pete, his eyes falling upon Guy.

"We have met before," answered the boy in a low tone.

"Yas, and you is havin' a hard time o' it, boy, and I feels sorry for yer."

"Then cut my bonds and let me escape, for I can go over the cliff by the tree yonder," continued Guy in the same low tone.

"W'u'dn't dare do it for a thousand dollars."

"I'll give you more, if you will."

"Has you got it?"

"I have a secret that will pan out a fortune for you if you let me go."

"How'll I get it?"

"Go with me."

"I hev half a min' ter trust yer."

"You can."

"Waal, I'll do it, and let yer go; but I has ter go with t'others now, so jist tell me whar I kin find yer one week from ter-day?"

"Right here."

"I'll do it," and Pistol Pete was about to bend over and sever the bonds that secured Guy, when the leader approached and called out:

"Well, boy, as you shot two of our horses, there is nothing for you to ride, so you'll have to remain behind."

"It matters not to me," was the reply.

"You've got more pluck than I ever saw done up in one person before, and I hate to kill you; but must obey orders."

"You don't mean ter kill him, does yer, Brass?" asked Pistol Pete.

"I do."

"When?"

"Before we start."

"Thet are too bad ter kill ther boy."

"Yes, but he will soon be a man, and the result to us then will be death, for he is a terror now."

"Let him go, lieutenant," urged Pistol Pete.

"No, he must die."

"Waal thet are too bad," but hedn't yer better let ther cap'n see him?"

"I have my orders from Captain Champ, Pete."

"Waal, thar are no use talkin' then?"

"None."

Pistol Pete looked sad, but whether at the prospect of Guy's death, or the thought of by it losing his fortune, it is hard to tell.

As for the poor young captive, he seemed to feel that they would kill him, and he nerved himself to meet his fate bravely and let them see that he could die without fear.

"Pete, put the youngster over there, just ten steps off, and I'll end his suspense," said Brass, in a cruel, cold tone.

"Lieutenant, I are sufferin' ther agonies o' sin, and it w'u'd help my arm amazin ef yer'd let me draw trigger on him," called out Hank as he came forward, moving his wounded arm.

"All right, Hank, you have the best right."

"Come, youngster, you have just one minute to live," and taking the arm of the boy the cruel man led him to a spot where the firelight fell full upon him.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MERCILESS ACT.

"ONE minute to live," repeated Guy, and life seemed suddenly black before him.

To go out of the world in his youth, on the very threshold of fortune, and hope, as it had been but a few days ago, was fearful to contemplate.

A sudden destiny seemed to have come over those of his name to be snatched from life without warning.

But he would not shrink from his fate; he would meet it unflinchingly.

Just as he was led to the place, where he was to stand and be shot down, he saw the men riding up with their horses saddled and bridled.

They were gazing at him without one atom of mercy in their faces, and one of them asked roughly:

"Goin' ter call in ther boy's chips, Brass?"

"Yes."

"Yas, he hain't old enough ter enjoy life yit, so he wont miss it," said another.

"Who are goin' ter do ther shootin'?" asked a third, as though anxious for the position of executioner.

"I is," replied Hank savagely, and he added:

"I'll git a leetle even tharby fer this arm o' mine."

"Kin yer shoot with yer left hand, Hank?"

"I kin, as yer will see, ef yer looks on."

"Boy, were you taught to pray?" rudely asked Brass.

"Yes."

"Then say your prayers, for your time about here. Get ready, Hank."

The man took his place, some fifteen feet from where Guy stood, and cocked his revolver, holding it in his left hand.

The others stood around, or sat on their horses, gazing with seeming interest, yet without mercy upon the sad scene.

Pistol Pete stood to one side, with a look of regret upon his face, though it was hard to analyze the cause, as to its being called there by sorrow, or greed at the loss of fortune through the boy's death.

Brass, the lieutenant, and leader, in the absence of Captain Champion, stood one side, a few feet from the boy and held a large gold watch in his hand.

As for Guy Marsden, he stood upright, his hands bound behind his back, his ankles tied firmly, and his face turned upon the merciless crew.

He was very pale, his features seemed as though cut from marble, but not a tremor went through his form, and not a quiver was upon his lip.

Fearlessly, defiantly he faced his executioner, though now and then he would raise his eyes as if in silent prayer.

"I are ready, Brass," said Hank.

"All right; boy, your time is up."

"Hank, fire for his heart, and do your work well," was the response of Brass, the leader of the merciless band.

"I'll do it prime, ef my right arm are in a sling, and I has ter shoot with my left," was the answer of the brute with painful deliberation.

As he spoke he slowly raised his weapon and aimed at Guy's head.

Then he lowered it, and leveled the weapon at the boy's heart.

As he did this, drawing out the suspense painfully, Guy Marsden's lips moved slightly and he turned his eyes sadly toward his mother's grave.

"Fire, if you are going to, Hank, or let somebody else do the job, for we must be off," sternly said Brass, and with his last word the wicked executioner raised his revolver for the third time.

When the muzzle pointed at the heart of the brave boy, he pulled the trigger.

With the report, a moan broke from Guy's lips, and while the blood spouted from the wound in his breast, he sunk to the earth.

"Throw him in the grave with his mother, Hank, and fill it up," ordered Brass.

"I hev done my job, Brass, so let them as has two arms do ther balance," was the sullen reply.

At this Pistol Pete stepped forward, bent over the form and raising it in his arms bore it to the grave.

Into it he let it fall gently, and then, seizing the shovel, which Guy had himself left sticking in the dirt, began to throw in the earth.

"Come, Pete, lead the way to where we are to join the captain," called out Brass, mounting his horse.

A few more shovelfuls of earth Pistol Pete threw into the grave and then hastily followed the others, muttering to himself:

"It were an infamous shame it were, ter kill thet boy, fer ef he had lived, he'd hev done ther squar' thing, I knows."

Mounting his horse he too rode away from the fatal spot.

The fire still burned brightly, casting dancing shadows far off, and only the crackling of the logs broke the stillness of the night for some minutes.

Then the deep howl of a wolf, scenting a feast was heard, and soon the hideous brute came skulking in sight, and anxiously gazing at the fire.

Another long-drawn-out howl, and another wolf appeared.

Sniffing the air they started toward the grave, not yet filled with earth.

Then another came, and another, all eagerly gazing at the light, and ranging themselves about the grave.

A wild yell in chorus, and seeing no one come from the cabin to disturb them, the savage brutes were about to pounce down into the grave, when a yell startled them, and a human form sprung from the limb of the tree growing in the canyon, upon the cliff, scattering the wolves in flight, growling furiously at their disappointment.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SURPRISE.

WHEN Guy left his mother and sister, they felt the loneliness of despair, for they were unused to such wild scenes, and to be left alone in that desolate region was fearful indeed.

Fortunately Cleone was a crack shot, and of an utterly fearless nature.

She had hunted in old Kentucky with her brother, and upon occasion had killed a bear, when he was rushing upon her, and to miss her aim was to lose her life.

All along the trail coming out she had hunted big game, and was considered the best shot in the train excepting Warpath Will the guide and her brother.

She was a perfect horsewoman, and these bold accomplishments had nerved her to face danger coolly and without fear.

She therefore felt equal to the task of defending her mother and herself against any ordinary danger, and also of providing themselves with food, should Guy be delayed in his return.

The condition of her mother, however, greatly distressed her, for she feared the end might come but too soon.

She put on a cheerful face, withal, and hustled about to make everything as comfortable as she could, and the while said cheerful things, prophesying that Guy would come back sooner than expected and bring her father, whose presence would readily build her mother's strength up to a point to permit of their going at once on home, for the cabin in the hills was their only home; and they looked forward to arriving there with hopes of happiness they had not known elsewhere.

Mrs. Marsden saw how very hard Cleone was trying to keep up a stout heart, and she did what she could to show her that she too felt that all would come well in the end; but she suffered greatly and knew that it would not be very long before she must pass away, and the thought made her very sad, to feel that she must give up life, husband and children just when fortune was smiling upon them.

Thus the day passed away and night came.

A fire had been built within the cabin by Cleone, and before its cheerful blaze sat mother and daughter in silence.

A couch had also been made for the invalid, by the loving daughter, and before very long Mrs. Marsden expressed a desire to rest upon it.

Cleone aided her to it, and then her mother said softly:

"Sing to me, my child."

In her rich contralto voice Cleone sung song after song, until she saw that her mother was asleep.

Then she ceased, and as she did so, the deep howl of a wolf without caused her to start and shudder.

The sound awoke Mrs. Marsden, who said:

"Did Guy bury the Indian he killed, Cleone?"

"Yes, mother."

"You do not think those savage brutes snarling without could get at the body of the poor red-skin, for it makes me shudder to think of even a savage enemy being thus torn to pieces after death."

"No, mother, brother buried the body," and going to the door Cleone fired her revolver, and the beasts went scampering away.

For a few moments more a silence fell between the mother and daughter, both being busy with their own thoughts.

Then they both started, for the sound of hoof-falls was heard without.

"Ho, within!" called out a deep voice, as a horse came close up to the door.

"Well, what do you wish, and who are you?" asked Cleone, in her deepest tones, to indicate that a man was the speaker.

"Is that you, Miss Cleone?" came the question, which showed that she had not deceived the one outside by her device.

"Yes, who are you?"

"Warpath Will, and I have come to see you."

"Indeed! It is the guide, mother," cried Cleone, and she took the heavy bar down from the door.

Warpath Will, in anticipation of being admitted, had already hitched his horse, and now stepped into the cabin, a pleasant smile upon his face.

"Oh, Mr. Hendricks, I am so glad to see you," cried Cleone, delighted at the sight of the guide, when she remembered the sacrifice he had made for them, and, in her loneliness, glad to see one she had known, though did not particularly like, while her mother also extended her hand wearily, though with seeming pleasure.

The guide's face brightened, and he said earnestly:

"I am happy in having a welcome from you, Miss Cleone; but I have come upon an important service."

"Ah, yes! you went as a hostage to the Mormons; but how did you escape, after your noble sacrifice for us?"

"I escaped in a way that I knew lay open to me, Miss Cleone, though I did not care to use it for particular reasons, which you will understand when I explain them."

"Your brother has gone, I believe, to your father's camp after him?"

"How did you know this?" asked Cleone, quickly.

"From the Mormons who are spying his movements, and who also told me that you were here."

"They know this, then?" asked Cleone, in a frightened way.

"Yes, but they shall not harm you."

"You are but one, Mr. Hendricks, and they many and merciless."

"I will use the same means to save you that I did to escape."

"You have not told me how you escaped from their clutches, and touched by your noble sacrifice for us, my brother and myself had made up our minds to attempt your rescue at all hazards."

"It was most kind of you, Miss Cleone, and just like your noble brother, too; but the sacrifice, as you are pleased to call it, which I made was not so great as you believe."

"To explain, I will say that the band of Captain Champion is not a legitimate squad of the Mormon Legion, but an offshoot that is more outlaw than anything else."

"The captain is known on the border as Red Champion, and though a Mormon and the foe of Gentiles, he does a good many acts that are not approved by Prophet Young and the rulers at Salt Lake City."

"You seem to be well informed regarding the Red Champion and the Mormons, guide," said Cleone, with something of her old sarcasm toward the guide returning.

"I am thoroughly informed, Miss Cleone, for it is my duty to be."

"May I ask why?"

"I am at present a Mormon officer myself!" was the calm response, and the groan of Mrs. Marsden was followed by a startled cry from Cleone.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SPY.

SEEING the effect of his strange words, upon both mother and daughter, Warpath Will hastened to say:

"Permit me to the more fully explain, Mrs. Marsden, and Miss Cleone."

"I do not understand, sir, how any further explanation can excuse your confession, that you are a Mormon," said Cleone haughtily.

"I said, at present, Miss Cleone, and I will put myself right by making a further confession, for I see how you are horrified at my words, and I should have known better than to say what I did."

"No excuses are necessary, sir."

"You are angry, and I do not blame you; but let me say—and the guide looked nervously around the cabin, and then went to the door and listened."

Then he removed the bar, drew his revolver and stepped outside.

Cleone heard his steps going around the cabin, and the thought came to her to spring up and bar the door; but she restrained herself and awaited his return, neither her mother or herself speaking the while.

"I must be careful, Miss Cleone, not to be overheard, should there be an eavesdropper," said the guide re-entering the cabin.

"Who could be an eavesdropper in this wild land?" asked Cleone.

"A Mormon."

"What have you, sir, to fear from Mormons?" was the cutting query.

"Anything, everything," was the response.

Cleone eyed him fixedly, for his words implied what she could not comprehend.

After a moment of silence he went on where he had left off, when going out of the cabin:

"Let me say, Miss Cleone, that I am at present a Mormon, not from choice, but necessity."

"I do not see how that can be, sir."

"You shall see."

"You are aware that there is a general feeling of ill-will existing, amounting to, I may say war, between the Mormons and the Gentiles, and the former are accused of many acts of cruelty and worse, toward the latter."

"The Government of the United States is determined to ferret out all such acts of the Mormons, and to do so employs spies."

"I am one of those spies, Miss Cleone."

"You!"

"Yes, I am a Government spy."

"And a Mormon?"

"Yes."

"You are doing that which the Bible says man cannot do."

"You mean serve two masters?"

"I do."

"Well, I am serving two, and one well."

"You speak in contradictions, guide."

"The truth is, Miss Cleone, to do my duty to my Government, I was compelled to become nominally a Mormon."

"Ah!"

"I am glad that you understand me now."

"Pray go on, sir."

"In becoming, as it were, a Mormon, I gained access to scenes that otherwise I could not have been a participant in, and to do my duty as far as I was able to the Government I served, I enlisted as a spy for the Mormon Prophet, and he believes me one of his most trusted emissaries."

"Indeed! but you run fearful risks."

"True, and yet see the power it gives me, for, when I found the Mormons on your trail, under this man Champion, I told your brother to offer me as a ransom for your safety, well knowing that he was anxious to get hold of me as one of his worst foes."

"The plan worked well with Champion, but his men were determined you should not escape, and went to your camp without his knowledge."

"Having a friend, Pistol Pete, in the band, I sent him to warn you to fly, and I was glad that you did so; but Captain Champion, discovering the act of his men, recalled them, and determined to hang upon your trail himself."

"This he did, carrying me with him, and, intending to take my life, he talked boldly before me of his plans."

"When word came to him from his scouts, that your brother had left you here and departed, Captain Champion boldly said that Guy had gone for reinforcements at the fort, and this act of his released him from his pledge, and that he should at once come here and make you a captive."

"Me?" cried Cleone, in alarm.

"My poor child," sighed Mrs. Marsden.

"Yes, you, Miss Cleone, for he knew that he could receive for you a large price did he carry you to Salt Lake to become the wife of some rich and distinguished Mormon, perhaps of the Prophet himself."

Cleone turned deadly pale, and Mrs. Marsden moaned piteously.

"Knowing his intention from his out-poken words, Miss Cleone, I determined to act."

"How?" softly said the poor girl.

"I determined to betray myself."

"Betray yourself?"

"Yes; that is, make myself known in my real character."

"Your real character?" echoed Cleone, mechanically.

"That is, my assumed character as a Mormon, for I knew that I could thus control him."

"What did you do, sir?"

"I told him that he was going too far."

"I told him that I had my eye upon him, and was the trusted spy of Brigham Young, the Prophet, and that instead of being his foe, as he believed, I had only been playing a part to the better carry out my plans of professed friendship for the Gentiles."

"He was astounded, and of course demanded proof, which I at once gave him."

"What proof had you?" asked Cleone, in the same listless way.

"I had this secret signet of the Prophet, and the passwords and private papers."

He took from an inner pocket as he spoke, a leather case with an official looking document in it, which he handed to Cleone, who read, written thereon:

"Respect a Secret Chief of Nauvoo."

"BRIGHAM YOUNG."

Then he took from about his neck a gold chain, to which hung a massive gold ring with a strange device thereon.

"And this outlaw respected these?" asked Cleone.

"He did, and more."

"What more?"

"He released me at once, for fear of his life should I report him, and yet he refused to give you up."

"Had he dare lay claim to me?" and Cleone's face flushed angrily and her eyes flashed fire.

"He did until I told him a falsehood regarding you and thus saved you."

"A falsehood?"

"Yes, Miss Cleone, I told him that you were my wife."

In an instant Cleone Marsden was upon her feet, and her words of fury were about to burst forth upon the guide, when a cry from her mother called her quickly to her side.

One look into that loved face and Cleone Marsden knew that the end had come—her mother was dying.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DEATH IN THE CABIN.

THE HORROR of the young girl's situation was intense.

Alone with a dying mother, in a wilderness, surrounded by foes, and with one present whom she knew not whether to trust or not.

What could she do?

Her first duty was to her mother, and forgetting self, she devoted herself to her with her whole heart.

Mrs. Marsden had fallen back in one of the death-like fancies that sometimes came over her.

But this one seemed worse than ever before, and it was very evident that she had been overcome by the shock of what Warpath Will had said.

"Speak, mother! speak to me!" cried Cleone, entreatingly.

The eyes of the dying woman slowly opened, her lips moved, and she grasped the hand of Cleone.

Then, bending her ear close Cleone heard:

"My poor desolate child; may God have mercy upon you."

Warpath Will came forward then, and, as tenderly as a woman might have done, he moved Mrs. Marsden into a more comfortable position and gave her a few drops of liquor from a flask he carried.

His manner was most gentle, his voice soft and soothing, and he no longer appeared the borderman whose name was a terror to his foes.

The liquor revived Mrs. Marsden, and then Warpath Will said:

"It is my duty to tell you, Mrs. Marsden, that this attack is fatal, so that you can say what is necessary to your daughter."

"I know it," said the poor woman.

"I will leave you alone with her; but let me cheer your dying hours by assuring you that I will be her friend, her protector, yes, her brother, until she becomes nearer to me, which I hope she may, for I love her with my whole soul."

"I have money, I have a pleasant home, and I will devote my life to her, giving up the wild career I am now following."

"I told Captain Champion a falsehood, but I did it for a purpose, for as my wife, he could lay no claim to Miss Cleone, which otherwise he would do."

"Are you listening, my dear Mrs. Marsden?" asked Warpath Will in the same gentle voice he had spoken all along.

"I hear every word," said Mrs. Marsden distinctly, while Cleone crouched near her, her head buried in her hands.

"I told Captain Champion we had been recently married, and that my claim was above that of even the Prophet."

"So I saved Miss Cleone from a life of wretchedness, and, if she cares not to accept me as her protector through coming years, she is at liberty to return to her father and brother, under whose care I will place her."

"Now, Mrs. Marsden, feel no worry regarding your daughter, for you can trust me in all faith."

He arose and left the cabin, and mother and daughter were alone.

"Do you love him, Cleone?"

"No! no! no! Mother, nor could I ever do so."

"He is kind and noble, and he has done much for us."

"True, mother, but yet I fear him, I doubt him."

"Still it were better his wife than the bride of a Mormon."

"Do not speak of it, mother: but feel assured that I will be his wife before I allow myself to become a Mormon's bride."

"Bless you, Cleone, my child," murmured the mother, and then she went on to speak of the absent son and husband, and left little messages for them.

Gradually her voice grew fainter, her tones sunk into a whisper, and then ceased while breathing a prayer for her desolate child.

Cleone knew that she was dead, and bent over her and wept bitterly.

Softly into the cabin came Warpath Will, and he saw that all was over.

He gently drew the weeping girl away, removed the body to the rear of the room and infolded it in a blanket, taking from about the neck a chain, to which was attached a locket with a miniature likeness of Don Marsden.

This he hung about the neck of Cleone, and she said in a low tone:

"Thank you; it was kind of you."

Then he made a couch for Cleone before the fire, and said:

"I am going out now, so retire and get rest, for you will need all your strength."

"I will awaken you at sunrise."

She arose and sunk down mechanically upon the couch, while he threw more wood upon the fire and left the cabin.

He then found his horse, and, staking the animal out, he set to work with pick and shovel, taken from the cabin, to dig a grave.

For a long time he worked, and at last it was finished.

Then he wrapped his blankets about him and lay down to rest.

It was dawn when he awoke, and he built a fire near the cabin, took his traps from his saddle and began to prepare breakfast.

Some birds he had shot the day before were put to broil upon the hot coals, and a pot of coffee with some crackers comprised the meal.

When all was ready he knocked at the door and it was opened by Cleone.

Her face showed how she had suffered, but she had dropped to sleep toward morning and felt refreshed.

"You are very kind," she said faintly, as she saw what he had done, and then, as her eyes fell upon the grave, they filled with tears and she repeated: "Yes, you are ever so kind to me."

A cup of coffee and a very slight breakfast was all that she could eat, and then Warpath Will said:

"I will bury her now; would you have me repeat the service for the dead over her? I know it by heart."

"Oh sir, indeed I would," she said earnestly.

He brought the body from the cabin, placed it gently in the grave, and then in his deep, impressive tones recited the service for the dead.

It was a painful, a touching scene, and one that Cleone Marsden never forgot.

After all was over, the guide said:

"To remain here would be dangerous, so I will take you to your father and brother, for we will doubtless meet them on the way."

"You know best, sir," was the low reply.

He left her to get ready, while he walked down

the mountain spur, which terminated in the cliff overhanging the canyon.

He was gone perhaps an hour, and Cleone, in her desolation, began to grow anxious, as she sat by her mother's grave awaiting his return.

Soon he appeared, mounted upon his horse, and leading, to her surprise, her own horse, with her saddle and bridle thereon.

She was about to ask him how he came by the animal, which her brother had led away with him, when he said:

"Miss Cleone, I was fortunate enough to get your own horse, which escaped from your brother, and was picked up by the band of Captain Champion."

"Your brother evidently did not care to delay, or tire his horse out in trying to catch your pony, so went on without him."

"You are sure no harm has befallen Guy?" she asked anxiously.

"Oh no, he is well able to take care of himself, and by this time must have reached his father, so that we will meet them returning for you."

"Do you not think that I had better await them here, for my father will wish to see my mother's grave?"

"I would say remain, only there are roving bands about that might come here at any moment and the mountain outlaws will not respect my signet as did Captain Champion."

"I will be guided by you, then," was the answer, and she allowed him to seat her in the saddle, and mounting his own horse they rode away slowly from the fateful spot.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MYSTERIOUS CHINEE.

THE person who had so unexpectedly appeared upon the cliff, and frightened the wolves away from the grave into which Guy Marsden had just been thrown, was a most remarkable-looking individual.

He had ascended to the cliff by the tree growing in the canyon, and sprung out upon the rocks with an agility that was remarkable.

As he advanced into the light of the fire it could be seen that he was a Chinese.

He was taller than the average of his race, by far, had great broad shoulders, wore the costume of his country, excepting that his feet were encased in moccasins and his head was surmounted by a black sombrero with a broad brim.

About his waist was a belt of arms, two revolvers and a long-bladed knife, and at his back hung a repeating rifle.

His hair was worn according to the style of his countrymen, in one long pig-tail behind, and to the end was tied a revolver which swung to and fro as he moved like a pendulum.

Certainly he was a remarkable-looking individual, and yet his face was an attractive one, though it wore the traditional cunning look, with the child-like grin for which his countrymen are so noted.

As though conscious that he had nothing to fear there, he strode directly toward the grave.

It seemed, by his actions, that he had seen from his perch in the tree all that had taken place there on the cliff.

Leaning over as he knelt upon the fresh earth, he thrust his arms down into the grave, and then rising he held in his strong grip the form of Guy Marsden.

"Not deadee! me know allee time," he muttered, as he shook the earth from the clothes and carefully wiped the dirt from the pale face.

Into the cabin he bore the limp form and placed it before the hearth.

Then he built a bright fire, and seating himself by the side of the boy gazed into his face intently.

"Have breathe allee samee," he murmured, and stripping away his hunting-shirt he gazed long and fixedly at the wound.

The bullet had entered his right side, and the wound was still bleeding slowly.

The Chinese took from a capacious receptacle somewhere about his mysterious costume a small box, which seemed to contain a vast assortment of odds and ends.

Selecting a pair of long tweezers, he inserted the smaller end into the wound.

Guy flinched as it entered, and the Chinese smiled and said:

"Allee lightee."

He moved the improvised probe about for awhile, and then took the tweezer end and inserted it into the wound.

After some time he drew it forth and the tweezers held the bullet.

"Allee lightee," he repeated, and then he began to dress the wound most carefully.

Again he had recourse to some hidden pocket and produced therefrom a roll of linen and a bottle of ointment.

The latter he poured upon the wound and then bound it up with the linen, again expressing his satisfaction with his "Allee lightee."

Having extracted the bullet and dressed the wound, the Chinese began to bathe the face of the wounded boy with cool water, brought from a spring on the cliff, and made him as comfortable as he possibly could.

Guy soon showed evidence of returning consciousness and strength, and the Chinese gazed at him with delight in his face.

At last Guy opened his eyes and gazed listlessly about him.

"Am I not dead?" he asked, faintly, as the memory of the execution flashed before him.

"No deadee, but muchee sickee."

"Keepee quiet and get along allee lightee."

The words turned the boy's eyes upon the speaker.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Chinee man, takee care of 'Melican boyee."

"Was I not shot down?"

"Yes, shootee downee, but I takee upee."

"Where am I?"

"In cabin."

"Yes, and my mother is dead, my sister gone I know not where."

"I was a prisoner to the band of Captain Champion."

"I remember all now; but who are you?"

"Me Chinaman."

"What are you doing here?"

"Livee allee round."

"Well, you have been kind to me, and I thank you; but am I not very badly wounded?"

"No goodee wound; but keepee quiet, and we takee care of you allee lightee."

"I will do as you tell me, for I have much to live for."

"Ay, and I will live to avenge those I love."

He spoke hoarsely, and his lips were set firmly.

"Talkee little now, muchee when allee lightee," said the Chinese, and realizing the worth of the Chinaman's advice, Guy Marsden turned his eyes from the firelight and sunk into a deep sleep.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CHINAMAN AT BAY.

THE Chinaman, who had, from his roost in the tree, seen all that took place on the cliff, and had, after the departure of the outlaws, for they were nothing else, so befriended Guy Marsden, seemed determined to continue in his good work after he saw the wounded boy asleep.

He went out of the cabin and brought in plenty of wood, and then, driving off the wolves, which had again returned, set to work filling in the grave, for, when he took Guy out of it, he had noticed that he was not the only occupant.

Ascertaining first that the one therein was really dead, he filled it in compactly, made a neat mound, and then drew over it heavy branches of trees, blown down by the winds, to protect it from wild beasts.

It was now dawn, and he returned to the cabin, to find Guy still sleeping.

Then he set out along the spur and disappeared in the thick timber of the mountain.

Soon the crack of his rifle was heard, and then again, and he came back bearing upon his strong shoulders a mountain deer and a squirrel.

Again he entered the cabin, but Guy still slept.

Going nearer he heard him breathing softly, and with his inimitable "Allee lightee," he walked out into the open air once more.

Searching in his blouse, he drew forth a bag of rice, and a pint of it he put into a pan, along with a piece of venison cut from a choice part of the animal.

Putting some cold water into the pan, he set it upon the fire and watched it as it began to stew.

"Makee goodee soup; makee boyee strong," he said with satisfaction, as he skinned and dressed his squirrel, which he placed on the coals for his own breakfast, along with a tin cup of coffee.

Eating his breakfast in silence, but with exceeding great gusto, he again took a peep into the cabin.

But his patient still slept.

"Makee muchee strong, plentee sleepee," he muttered, as he set to work rubbing up his weapons and setting things to right, as though he expected to depart at an instant's notice.

Again he entered the cabin, and found Guy's eyes fixed upon him.

"Feelee allee lightee?" he asked, as he approached and squatted down by the wounded boy.

"I remember you now; you were so kind to me before I went to sleep."

"Yes, I feel much better, but suffer here," and he placed his hands upon his wound.

"It allee lightee bime-by; but habee some soupee?" and he skipped out and brought in a cool drink of water, which Guy drank with a relish.

Then he bathed his face and hands most tenderly, gave him some medicine he took from a small bottle, and next dressed his wound as softly as a woman could have done.

"Now soupee," he said, and he went after the rice and venison soup he had made.

Guy drank some of it with evident relish, and would have taken much more had not the Chinese drawn it away with the wise remark:

"Little bittee goodee; big bittee bad."

"Who are you?" asked Guy, with curiosity.

"Chinaman."

Guy smiled and said:

"There were some Chinamen in the mines a few months ago; were you at Lost Hope City?"

"No."

"Where is your home?"

"Habee no home."

"What are you doing here?"

"Takee care 'Melican boyee."

"Yes, and taking good care of me, too; but as you will not tell me about yourself, tell me your name—mine is Guy Marsden."

"No likee long namee; callee Boyee."

"All right; and what shall I call you?"

"Callee me China."

"All right."

"Allee lightee; now no talkee, but sleepee more, makee strong."

With this he stepped to the door, and, as though anticipating a long stay, he began to gather quantities of fallen wood and pile it up by the side of the cabin.

When returning from one of these pilgrimages to the mountain-side, dragging a huge limb after him, he suddenly came to a halt and sprang for shelter

all the tree beneath which was the grave of S. Marsden, and which had so nearly become the resting-place of Guy Marsden.

Voices fell upon his ear, and he saw three horses beyond the cabin.

He heard loud talking in the cabin, and one voice said:

"Waal, pards, my idee are ter kill him, fer ther lieutenant said it were ther cap'n's orders—and of he hev riz from ther dead, then he oughter be settled ag'in."

"I hates ter shoot a wounded boy, pards; but ef we went back without doin' so, ther cap'n w'd make it warm fer us," said a second voice, while a third added:

"Waal, in some myst'rous way he hev got out o' ther grave, and he won't tell us who helped him; but we knows somebody did."

"Ef we hedn't come back here, ter s'arch fer ther lieutenant's leather puss, which he says he lost about here, ther young bantam w'd hev got well, and we'd hev him on our trail afore long, so I says kill him."

As the speaker spoke there came a sharp report and he fell dead in his tracks.

Dismayed, the other two rushed out, to behold before them the Heathen Chinese.

There was blood in China's eye, and he meant mischief, for another of the wretches fell by a bullet from his revolver, before he could fire at the one whom he saw was his foe; and though the third managed to twice discharge his weapon, he did no damage, and before he could do so a third time, he was in the clutch of the Chinaman.

For an instant only the struggle lasted, and the outlaw, with a shriek of terror, felt the keen blade of his foe entering his heart.

"Shootee Boyee, guessee not, no, no," coolly said China as he hastily entered the cabin.

The excitement he had passed through was certainly not good for Guy, and the Chinaman found him flushed and nervous.

"Oh! I feared they had killed you, China," he cried.

"Oh, no, China killee bad 'Melican man."

"Allee lightee now, go sleepee," was the very cool remark, and he made Guy comfortable once more, while he went out of the cabin.

"Tree hossee, muchee goodee," he said, as he gazed at the three horses.

"No goodee place here now; go quicke, take Boyee," he added, and he went to work preparing to evacuate the place.

He cut two long poles and rigged two of the ends together with a kind of harness, which looked as though he meant them to serve as shafts for a horse.

Some distance from the after ends he made with lariats a kind of network, upon which he spread the blankets of the three slain Mormons.

Unsaddling one of the horses, the one that looked most likely to be a good draught animal, he rigged him into the shafts, and led him around to see that he would work all right.

Then he quietly, and with a cunning leer upon his face searched the bodies of the dead outlaws, and seemed satisfied with what he found, for he said:

"Goodee! Chinaman gettee what! bad 'Melican man stealee."

The other traps about the cabin he packed upon one of the other two horses, and then going to the three bodies, threw them to one side with the remark:

"Wolfee habee plenty supper; no eatee Boyee or Chinaman."

Entering the cabin he saw that Guy was awake; but his face was flushed and he seemed wandering a little, while his pulse, which the Chinaman placed his fingers upon with the air of a doctor, showed a rising fever.

"Must leabee here; China takee Boyee allee lightee."

With this he raised Guy, as though he had been an infant, in his strong arms, and placed him upon the rope hammock he had made upon the long shafts.

Returning, he threw upon the pack-horse the blankets and other things in the cabin, and then, hitching the three horses in a row, he mounted the leader, and leading the other two rode slowly away from the cabin, picking the easiest way, so that the dragging ends might glide along without a jar, to give pain to the wounded boy.

As night fell, they reached the valley, and the strange party wound its way slowly along, the Chinaman having without doubt, some given destination in his mind.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SPECTER OF LOST HOPE CITY.

ALONG the trail to the mines, about Lost Hope City, Warpath Will led the way, poor Cleone following with a sad heart, yet with hope of soon being with her father and brother.

Every deer that bounded across the path, she seemed to feel was the sound of their horses' hoof-strokes, and thus disappointment after disappointment greeted her.

Ever gentle and kind, Warpath Will did all in his power to cheer her up, and when they camped for the night, he made her up a little shelter of boughs, a bed of leaves, and built near a cheerful fire.

Then he prepared supper, and saying that he would stand guard, withdrew for the night to some distance away.

Until morning Cleone did not see him, and then she awoke at the crackling of the blazing logs and beheld the guide preparing breakfast.

He looked bright and cheerful, notwithstanding his loss of rest, and invited her to breakfast,

"He is so kind, so gentle, and yet I fear him, yes I almost hate him," she murmured, as she sat by the rivulet, bathing her face and hands, while her eyes were fixed upon the tall form of the scout busy about the fire.

After the meal was over he placed Cleone in her saddle, and then again resumed the trail.

It was afternoon when they arrived in Lost Hope City, and the deserted place had the effect of increasing the gloom of the poor girl.

Warpath Will explained to her that when mines became useless, miners were wont to desert them, and such had been the case with Lost Hope City.

"Has no one remained?" asked Cleone.

"No one, the place is left to the dead in the burying-ground yonder, and the ghosts that roam the place at night."

It was an unfortunate remark of the guide's and he regretted it, as he saw the look upon Cleone's face.

"Do you believe in ghosts?" she asked in a low tone.

"I do not know what I believe hardly, for I have seen strange sights I could not account for, Miss Cleone—Hal see there!"

It was broad daylight, for the sun had not yet touched the western mountains, and one half the valley was in the sunlight.

Upon Lost Hope City the sunlight also fell, but beyond, across the stream, under the brow of the mountain the shadows fell somber and heavy.

There lay the little burying-ground of the miners, and the small head-boards above the graves, stood out in bold relief, many white as they were against the black shadows.

As he had spoken the eyes of the guide were turned upon the burying-ground, and suddenly an object had caught his gaze that was white, but not still, as were the head-boards.

At his cry Cleone glanced hastily in the direction indicated, and beheld a human form, clad from head to feet in a white, shroud-like garment, slowly walking among the graves.

"What is it?" she asked, drawing rein, and speaking in a hoarse whisper.

"I know not."

"It certainly is a human being, sir."

"Yes, or the ghost of one," and Warpath Will seemed more impressed than he wished to admit.

"Let us ride there and find out."

"No, no," he said quickly.

"Do you fear to go?"

"It is better that we should not; come, let us ride on and reach the cabin of your father before night-fall," and the guide seemed deeply moved.

Before he could check her, or knew what she intended, Cleone suddenly started forward, and urging her horse into a run, went flying down the trail that led across the stream and to the little cemetery.

"Come back! for Heaven's sake stop, Cleone!" shouted the guide.

But the young girl had made up her mind just what she would do, and urged her horse on the faster.

Seeing that she would not heed his call, Warpath Will spurred on in pursuit.

Down the trail went Cleone, across the shallow stream, and then up the road to the burying-ground.

She kept her eyes upon the white-robed form, which was standing motionless, apparently regarding her approach, and distant from her some two hundred yards.

On up the trail she ran, and behind her came the guide.

Suddenly her horse stumbled, and in recovering him, she took her eyes off of the shadowy form.

When she again looked it had disappeared.

But though amazed, for she had certainly expected to find some person, masquerading as a ghost, Cleone kept on and entered the burying-ground.

There were about a couple of hundred graves there, nearly all with a white, painted head-board, and the name of the dead carved upon it, while some of them were quite pretentious, having been built of planks in the shape of large tombstones.

Once one was the trunk of a tree painted white, another had a large cross above it, another a skillfully-constructed miniature church, all of snowy hue, and it was evident from the workmanship upon many of them, that a skillful carpenter had been the architect.

Through the narrow streets of the little village of the dead, Cleone rode at a walk, her eyes searching diligently everywhere for the white-robed form.

But nowhere could she see trace of it.

Then the guide joined her, his face very pale, and he too, at her request joined in the search.

It was of no use, for the white form had disappeared as mysteriously as though it had been indeed a tenant of one of the graves about them.

There was no hiding-place near, and with the mystery unsolved, Cleone rode on with the guide to her father's house.

CHAPTER XX.

A BITTER BLOW.

THE sun had gone down behind the mountains, and the canyon was in deep shadow, when the guide turned into it, Cleone riding by his side.

Above them the skies were rosy bright, the mountain-tops were tinged with sunlight, and the slope, on which stood the miner's cabin was a lovely spot indeed.

The little cabin was there, and beyond it, further under the shelter of the mountain spur, was the large "mansion" which Don Marsden had intended as the home of his family.

It was yet unfinished, and with no one near looked grim and desolate.

From the dwelling cabin of the miner, no smoke curled up from the chimney, and no one stood in the door to give them a welcome.

Up the slope they rode, halting near the door.

There was still no one to greet them.

"We have missed them," said Cleone, her eyes filling with tears.

"Yes, they have taken some other trail to meet you, and we have passed them unseen."

"And what a blow to my poor father and Guy to find not my mother, but a grave."

"Do not think of that, Miss Cleone, but cheer up, for they will soon return."

"And I must await them here?"

"Certainly."

"How strange that I did not think of leaving a note on the cabin door, telling all, and saying when I had come."

"I did so for you," was the reply.

"It was so good of you to think of it."

"Well, I suppose this is home—but see! the door has been broken open."

She sprang from her horse as she spoke, and Warpath Will, who had already alighted, saw also that the door had been violently opened.

"Some vandals have been here—yes, the place has been robbed," he said quickly, as he threw open the door and entered.

"And this is the home of my father?"

"The little nest where he and Guy have so long lived and struggled for a fortune."

"I have often pictured it in my mind, and mamma and myself have talked over and over again about this spot and the loved ones who dwelt here."

"Alas! and what is the end?"

"I come here alone! I leave my poor mother lying in her grave by the roadside to this spot, which has been the Mecca of our hopes—her hopes and mine."

"No one greets me here, for father and brother have gone."

"The place has been desecrated by some robber band, and alone, as it were, I am here mistress of the dear, yet dread spot."

"Oh, Heaven have mercy! how bitter the blow that brings sorrow upon me and blasts all of my hopes!"

She had sunk into a chair as she spoke, and now buried her face in her hands.

When she began to soliloquize aloud, Warpath Will had noiselessly left the cabin, and when she looked up she had found him gone.

"That is a strange man, and he is so good to me."

"I believe that he loves me, and yet I cannot love him."

"He is handsome, noble, generous, and oh! so good to me! but alas! I fear him all the time, and only wish that I did not."

"If harm should befall my father and brother, what will become of me?"

"The thought is madness, and I will not dwell upon it."

"Well, I am at home, and I must make the best of it, and await the coming of father and Guy."

"Oh! that poor mamma were here with me, then would I be content, and if all of us could gather around this little table to-night, I would be positively happy, and the hooting of the owls and howling of the wolves would be but music in my ears."

Again she bent her face in her hands and thus remained for a long time.

Then she arose and threw off her riding-habit, changing it for a dress which came in the pack, and which Warpath Will had thrown in through the open door.

Thus equipped for work, she set the cabin to rights, and going outside, found the guide busy.

He had staked out the horses, built a fire near the cabin, brought water from the rivulet, and, as Cleone came out of the cabin, he was dressing a deer which he had shot during the afternoon.

It was now dark, and the mountains loomed up black and gloomy about them.

In almost silence the two ate their supper, and then Warpath Will said:

"As the cabin has been broken into, I will be on my guard to-night, and sleep in the new building, where I can see any one by the firelight, should they approach you."

"Ever thoughtful and good—good-night," answered Cleone, and she went to her little cabin. Warpath Will followed her, built a fire on the hearth, and then walked away, leaving her seated in front of it and brooding over her sorrows.

Approaching his horse, where it was staked out, the guide threw the saddle and bridle upon it, and mounting, rode away in the direction of Lost Hope City.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHASED BY A PHANTOM HORSEMAN.

SLOWLY down the valley rode Warpath Will.

Why he was going toward Lost Hope City he did not exactly know.

He seemed impelled by some strange impulse he could not resist.

A desire came over him to solve the mystery he had seen there.

He had observed the white-robed form in the cemetery in the broad daylight, and had seen it disappear as suddenly as though it had faded into mist.

Were some of the old denizens of the place still hanging about it, trying to frighten people?

What object had they?

True, one who remained might find "pickings" in the different mines that would repay him handsomely, where a thousand would think it nothing.

But would one man wish to remain in that lone spot, or even two, far from any habitation? He would at least see.

Down the valley he rode, slowly and watchfully, until at last the dark objects came in sight that marked the shanties of the deserted mining-town.

Dismounting from his horse the guide hitched him to a small tree, and wended his way on foot, his rifle in hand, ready for a surprise.

"If I see the white form I shall fire on it regardless of consequences," he muttered in a grim tone.

On foot he glided noiselessly forward.

Arriving at the first shanty he halted.

No one was there to oppose him.

Through the deserted streets he wended his way, and halting near the largest structure in the place, the one which had been the tavern, he turned his eyes over toward the cemetery.

The moon was just rising, and its light fell upon the little burying-ground, casting out in bold relief the white head-boards there.

The town of Lost Hope was in shadow, for the moon had not yet soared high enough to throw its light upon it.

Presently the guide started, for he was confident that he saw a white object moving in the cemetery.

Was it imagination? Was one of the white board monuments really moving?

He kept his eyes riveted upon the spot, and, after awhile said:

"It does move."

A long time he watched, and then muttered:

"It is a human form, clad in white, and coming this way."

Down the hill from the burying-ground came a tall form clad in pure white.

It glided along, around the creek, as though walking upon the waters, for the guide heard no splashing sound, and came directly toward the tavern where he stood.

"When it comes nearer I will fire," he said, and he brought his rifle up ready to carry out his threat.

Nearer and nearer came the white-robed form, and the rifle of the guide was about to go up to the shoulder, when suddenly it came to a halt.

Warpath Will lowered the rifle, and gazing earnestly beheld the arms of the seeming phantom wave to and fro.

But the gaze of what he was so intently looking at seemed not toward him, but upon a point of the camp further down, for he faced in that direction.

Instinctively the guide looked in that direction and lo! there was another phantom.

Coming directly toward him, and not further off than the other, was a snowy steed, and rider clad in white.

The horse seemed to come on in utter silence, for no sound of hoof-falls falling upon the flinty ground could be heard.

In dismay the guide listened an instant, and then, almost unnerved, he threw his rifle to his shoulder and drew trigger.

The rifle was aimed at the phantom horseman, and yet, there came no flash, no report.

The rifle did not explode.

"My God! why should my rifle fail me now?" cried the guide, and he turned and fled from the spot!

Looking over his shoulder, as he ran, he saw the mounted phantom in pursuit.

The one on foot he could not see.

His own steps made a ringing sound, and yet the white horse behind him seemed to move noiselessly.

On, on he flew, until his horse came in sight.

He saw that the phantom in chase was gaining upon him.

Whipping out his knife he cut the reins, not stopping to untie them, and sped off at the full speed of his horse.

Loud rung the hoof-strokes of his own horse, as he dashed along, but the white steed behind seemed to run without sound.

"I dare not attempt to fire again," he said, so on he flew for half a mile, not daring to look behind him, for fear he would see the specter almost upon him.

At length he gained courage sufficient for a hasty glance, as the suspense was awful.

The phantom had disappeared.

But the guide held on his way at full speed, and did not draw rein until the miner's cabin came in sight.

There was still the reflection of the firelight in the cabin where was Cleone Marsden; but he rode by, staked his horse out in the vale, and sought the shelter of the "mansion" for the night.

He readily found himself snug quarters and wrapping his blanket about him sought to rest.

But sleep did not visit him for hours, and only when he was utterly worn out.

When he awoke the sun was shining brightly, and glancing out of his retreat he saw Cleone getting breakfast.

He hastened to join her, excusing his late nap by telling her that he had stood watch all night.

But he did not once refer to the phantoms he had seen in Lost Hope City.

CHAPTER XXII.

CLEONE'S CHOICE.

For several days the two, Cleone Marsden and Warpath Will, the guide, remained at the miner's cabin.

The guide was as kind as a brother could have been.

He did not go far from the cabin at any time, but procured plenty of game, and seemed to try and make the maiden forget her sorrows.

At night he pretended to stand guard; but as soon

as Cleone went to her cabin, he would seek his retreat and strive to forget himself in slumber.

Most anxiously did Cleone watch for the coming of her father and brother, and her heart ached with dread.

They should have been back the day after her arrival, and yet they came not.

"What could it mean? Had harm befallen them?" she would ask herself over and over again.

One day the guide went out on a hunt for game, and he returned after several hours leading several horses, one of which Cleone recognized as the animal ridden by her brother Guy.

Breathlessly she rushed to meet the guide crying:

"Oh, sir! what has happened?"

"Miss Cleone, I found these two animals straying in the valley."

"One you know is Guy's horse, and I suppose your father rode the other one, and I fear—"

"Oh! they are dead, they are dead!" groaned Cleone in despair.

"Oh no, I do not believe that; but they either deserted their horses, and took to the hills, when chased by the Mormons, or the animals got away from them when they halted to camp, for you see they are saddled and bridled."

"Yes, yes."

"Now if it was on their way to meet you, by this time they should have returned, even on foot, and, as they have not, I think—"

"Well?" groaned Cleone as the man paused.

"I was going to say that I intended to find your father and brother for you."

"Oh, how good you are to me."

"But I dare not leave you here alone, and therefore must ask you to go with me."

"Whither?"

"I dislike to ask it, but then there is nothing else to be done."

"Where do you wish me to go?"

"If you remain here, the band of Red Champion would come and capture you, were I not here to defend you, or wild beasts might destroy you, for there are grizzlies in these mountains, not to speak of roving bands of Indians, while, if there was nothing to fear, the loneliness of this life, without one to call upon, would be enough to drive you mad."

"It would, it would."

"For these reasons I ask you to trust me and go with me."

"Where?"

"To Salt Lake."

Cleone started and became very pale, but uttered no word.

"Understand me," said the guide, quickly:

"I wish you to go where you can be comfortable, and have no cause to fear."

"My position as spy enables me to enter the Mormon stronghold, and I will get you good quarters there, and, to protect you wholly, will give out the same story that I told Red Champion."

"What was that?"

"That you were my wife."

Again Cleone started, and the guide went on:

"With this belief the Mormons will not disturb you, and I can leave in perfect confidence on my search for your father and brother."

"When I have found them they can await you here and I will go after you and take you to them."

"I thank you."

"You can thus take your choice, Miss Cleone, of remaining here, or of going to Salt Lake."

"I would die if I stayed here," she said with a shudder.

"I fear so."

"I can trust you wholly, I feel."

"You can."

"I will go with you."

"Then I will at once get ready."

Half an hour after the two rode away from the little cabin in the canyon, and their destination was Salt Lake City, the stronghold of the Mormons.

It was a long, hard ride, but just after dark the evening of the second day, they rode into the city of strange people.

The guide seemed thoroughly acquainted with the place, and passed the Mormon guards without trouble, as soon as he was recognized.

Turning into a quiet street, he stopped at a small house, pleasantly located, and with pretty grounds surrounding it.

A woman with stern mien and quiet manner met them and greeted him somewhat coldly, and gazed at Cleone with interest.

"Mrs. Claire, I have brought you a boarder for a short while, for I am called at once away."

"My wife, Mrs. Claire."

Cleone started, and her face flushed angrily at his words, and she seemed about to break forth in indignant denial, when the guide pressed her arm in warning.

The woman addressed as Mrs. Claire said, quietly:

"I will look to your comfort, madam, during the absence of your husband."

"Come with me, please."

She led the way into a cosy sitting-room and bedroom adjoining, and a lamp burned cheerfully upon the table.

"There are your rooms, Mrs. Hendricks, and I will have supper prepared at once."

She left the room, and before Cleone could speak, the guide said:

"Do not betray yourself, or me, I beg of you."

"I told you how I would have to bring you here, and it was your choice to come."

"After supper I will depart, and devote my life to finding your father and brother."

"Thank you—oh, thank you!" and she extended her hand.

He grasped it warmly, and continued:

"Cleone, you know that I love you, and I that in all truth you were my wife."

"You know me as I am, a plain hunter of the plains, but I have means, and in other than this western land would be glad to have you go with me to live, and I would devote my life to your happiness."

"Answer me then if, when I have found your father and brother, you will be my wife?"

She seemed deeply moved, and for a moment did not speak.

Then she said, faintly:

"I cannot give you the love I would wish to bestow upon one I called my husband, but you have been good to me, and I cannot refuse you."

"Come to me when you know the fate of those I love, and I will be your wife."

"I thank you," he said earnestly.

"From my inmost heart I thank you for those words!"

With this he led her out to supper, and soon after mounted his horse and rode away down into the busy part of the town.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MINER ALLY.

WHEN Warpath Will left Cleone, he wended his way down into the busy part of the town, as I have said.

He sought a stable, where he left the tired animal he had ridden, exchanging him for a fresh horse, a superb bay.

Many persons seemed to know the guide, as he went along.

Seeking the head-quarters of the Mormon Legion he remained within for some time, in earnest conversation with the commandant, and then he mounted his horse and rode out of the town.

After leaving the last guard post behind him, he turned into a canyon and soon drew rein before a small hut.

A light glimmered through several cracks between the logs, and the guide called out:

"Hello!"

"Oh! I'm here, pard, and has a bead on yer."

"I heerd yer horse a-comin' so jist got ter my leetle lookout, fer these is troublous times."

"Who is yer, and what are yer biz with Miner Mark?"

The man could not be seen, but he evidently had his face close to some hole in the wall of the cabin.

"Don't you know me Mark?"

"Yas, I knows you now, cap'n."

"Come in," and the man threw open the door.

The guide dismounted and entered the little hut. It was an humble home, a bunk, a few blankets and robes, a table, bench and in one corner a pick and shovel, in another a rifle and shot-gun.

In another corner, in the rocky floor was a clear spring, bubbling up and finding its way out under the log wall, and a cupboard held the cooking utensils and household stores.

"Well, Mark, how does the world use you?" asked the guide, taking a seat upon the bench.

"Waal, I git along, cap'n."

"Do you hunt much now?"

"Pretty much all ther time, fer robes and skins finds a good market, and game sells in ther city," was the reply of the man, who was dressed in a buckskin suit, wore moccasins and a wolfskin cap, the tail hanging down his back.

His face was bearded high upon his cheeks, and the wolfskin cap was pulled down to his brow, so that his eyes and nose were the only features visible and these were not altogether prepossessing.

He looked like a man of great strength and endurance, and one that would be a dangerous foe.

"Haven't found the mine you have been looking for?"

"No cap'n, but I'll git it yet, fer I are confident I are intended fer a rich man."

"Well, I have found a mine, Mark."

"No."

"Yes I have."

"Whar?"

"Some distance from here."

"How does she pan out?"

"Big."

"Are yer all alone in it?"

"It is not mine."

"Thought yer said you hed found it, cap'n?"

"Well, Mark, it is jist this way:

"The mine was found by a man, who came out here to dig a fortune."

"He had his boy with him, and they hit upon this lead."

"Then the boy went to Kentucky after his mother and sister, and on the way out the old lady died."

"I was guide for the train, and I fell in love with the girl."

"Jist like yer, cap'n."

"Well, the boy left the girl and her mother, while he went to bring the father to see his wife die, and neither have since been heard of."

"I took the girl to her father's cabin, but as I could get no news of either the man or his son, I brought the girl to Salt Lake and left her."

"Yas, cap'n; are she likely?"

"She is beautiful."

"Jes' so."

"Now Mark, you have the reputation of being a good miner."

"None better, Cap'n."

"I wish to arrange with you to go to that mine and work it for the young girl."

"How much, Cap'n?"

"One fourth the dust you dig."

"How do it pan out?"

"Big."

"I'm thar."

"When will you go?"

"Now, fer I hain't got nothing to keep me."

"Where is your horse?"

"Grazin' on the slope."

"Then get him and we'll be off."

"Yas cap'n."

The old hunter, a miner, for he was both, left the cabin and soon led up a very hard-looking animal; but he had the go in him, as the guide soon discovered when they were upon the trail together.

It was late the next afternoon when they reached the little cabin of Don Marsden.

All was quiet there, though it was evident to the guide that some one had been there since his departure with Cleone.

He said nothing about this to the miner but asked:

"Are you afraid of ghosts, Mark?"

"Ghosts?"

"Yes."

"Yer mean dead folks walkin' on 'arth?"

"Yes."

"Not much I hain't."

"I am glad to hear it."

"Why, pard cap'n?"

"Well, as the mines down the valley did not pan out very well, the miners deserted them, and Lost Hope City is wholly deserted, though the boys say the ghosts walk about the streets at night."

"Let 'em walk."

"You are not superstitious, then?"

"Super—what?"

"Superstitious."

"What are that?"

"You do not believe in ghosts?"

"Cap, I hain't never seen a speerit, though folks says they does meander around; but I doesn't believe nothin' I don't see."

"You do not?"

"I does not, so just show me thet mine yer spoke of, thet I may know whether to believe thet thar are gold in it."

They left their horses staked out in the valley, and the guide led the way to the mine.

"Well, what do you think?" asked Warpeth Will, as Miner Mark examined the place closely.

"Thar is gold here."

"Yes, plenty of it."

"So I sees, or at least thar is prospects of pickin' plenty."

"And you'll work it?"

"I will."

"On the terms I offered?"

"Agreed, Cap."

"Then to-morrow I will leave you, but in a week or so I will return."

"Some biz elsewhere?"

"Yes, I will be only able to come here once or twice a month; but work hard and get out all the dust you can."

"I'll do it, Cap."

"Should you wish to see me about anything, you know where to find me?"

"I does; now let us go back to ther cabin and git supper, fer I are as hungry as a coyote."

Their way led them past where the horses were staked out, and the eyes of the old hunter fell upon something that seemed to surprise him.

"Thar is witches in this here valley, Cap."

"What do you mean, Mark?"

"Look thar!"

"What is it?"

"At your horse and mine."

"Well, they are safe."

"Did you braid the mane and tail of your nag?"

"No! by Jupiter! they are braided close."

"And so is ther mane and tail o' my rickety old bones."

"Who could have done it?"

"Witches."

"Do you believe in such things?"

"I believe in what I see."

"You are not afraid to stay here?"

"Cap, yer don't know me, fer I hain't afeerd o' nothin'," was the calm reply.

The manes and tails of the horses were certainly braided, and it was well done.

The braids were taken out, and the two men went on and prepared their supper.

That night Miner Mark stood watch; but in the morning it was found that the witches had again been around, for the same braiding act had been repeated.

Glad to leave the mysterious valley the guide mounted his horse and rode away, leaving Miner Mark alone at the cabin, and saying nothing to him about the strange sights he had seen in Lost Hope City.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SPECTER OF THE MINE.

"HELLO, Mark!"

"I are here."

The hail was given by Warpeth Will, as he rode up to the cabin in the canyon, just at dark one day, some two weeks after his departure.

The answer came from the old miner, who had gone into his cabin at sunset, and was cooking his supper.

The door opened, and the miner stepped out.

"Back ag'in, Cap?"

"Yes, what news?"

"Plenty."

"You have found plenty of gold?"

"Yas."

"That is good."

"So it are."

"Well, I'll stake my horse out and come in to

supper, so throw another steak on the coals for me."

"There are plenty," and the miner turned again to his cooking, while the guide went off with his horse.

He soon returned, hung his saddle and bridle up on a peg and seated himself before the fire.

"Well, Mark, you have a good supper here."

"Yas, I loves eatin'."

"Anybody been around?"

"Don't know."

"Don't know?"

"No."

"Would you not have seen them, if any one had been here?"

"Yas, I'd hev seen anybody, but I can't sw'ar they was in ther body."

"Hal you have been troubled by the witches?"

"Ther witches hasn't worried me none, Cap, but they has made it lively fer ther old horse."

"How do you mean?"

"I means that they braided his mane and tail every night, as reg'lar as a gal fixin' her ha'r, fer Sunday camp-meetin', and when I shaved every identical ha'r off—"

"Did you cut off your horse's mane and tail?"

"You'll think so when yer sees him."

"Go on with your story."

"I were sayin' thet arter I cut ther mane and tail off, they tuk ter ridin' him, until he looks weary, I kin tell yer."

"Why did you not watch to see who it was doing this?"

"Watch fer witches? Cap, is yer a durned fool?"

"I hope not; but I am glad it is no worse."

"It are worse."

"What?"

"Cap, I hes seen a ghost."

"A ghost?"

"Yas, a raal live one."

"When?"

"Often."

"Where?"

"Thar at ther mine."

"No!"

"I says yes."

"This is remarkable."

"So it are, Cap; but did yer find them as you went to look for?"

"The miner and his son?"

"Yas."

"I did not."

"Did you hear of 'em?"

"No."

"Think they is dead?"

"Yes."

"Yer knows how ther miner looked?"

"He was described as a fine-looking man, with black beard and hair."

"I saw a likeness of him which his daughter had."

"Yas, that are him."

"How do you know?"

"I has seen him."

The guide turned very pale, while he gasped forth:

"Seen him?"

"Yas, or rather I has seen his ghost."

"His ghost?"

"Yas, Cap, fer I believes in ghosts now, I does."

"Explain just what you have seen, Mark."

"I has seen thet which I doesn't like ter see."

"Well?"

"I goes ter work in ther mine every mornin' jist arter sun-up, and I works there as long as ther daylight will let me see ther dust."

"Yes."

"Waal, Cap, it were ther fu'st day thet I went ter work thar that I seen it."

"Saw what?"

"Ther ghost."

"Oh, go on with your story, Mark, and don't keep me in suspense."

"Waal, Cap, thar hain't no hurry, fer we hev ther night afore us, and arter I tell yer, ef yer wants ter go and see, yer kin fer yerself."

"I wish to see nothing, but I do wish to know just what you have seen," said the guide, impatiently.

"Waal, Cap, I were so glad at ther dust I were findin', thet I dug on until it were dark."

"Then I scraped ther metal together, and put in my bag, and riz up to come home."

"It were dark then, or mighty nigh it."

"Well, Cap, I confess I was skeered, and I drop ther gold and tuk hold onto iron, as bein' more service to use jist then."

"But I didn't shoot my revolver arter drawin' it, fer I kinder thought it would do no good."

"Thar, standin' right out o' ther mine, and gazin' at me in a sad kind o' way, was what I at first tuk fer a man."

"But ther second glance showed me that no man hed I ever seen prowl in round like him, tho' I hed seen 'em wear what he hed on when they was in ther coffins."

"He hed a shroud about him from head to foot, and only his white face was exposed."

"Across ther forehead were a red mark, blood-red, ther looked something like a knife-cut, tho' I hes seen thet same kind o' wounds made by the barrel o' a revolver hitting a man over the fo'head."

"He hed awful sad eyes, thet did not seem ter blink, and black beard and ha'r."

"This were all thet were not covered up by ther shroud."

"Hello, pard," says I.

"But he didn't hello worth a cent."

"Pard," says I, "has yer met with a accidint?"

"Still he didn't talk."

"Pard, ef this are your mine, you looks dead ef yer hain't, so don't mind ef I are here, fer I are workin' it on shares fer yer darter."

"Still he stood gazin' at me, and I begun ter feel uncomfortable."

"So I stoops down, gits up my bag o' dust, and lights out, leavin' him standin' thar."

"This is remarkable."

"It are."

"Why did you not shoot him?"

"Kill a man as were already dead, Cap?"

"I'd have tried the virtue of lead."

"He didn't bother me, nor has he since."

"You have seen him again?"

"Oh, he are thar as reg'lar as I are."

"Ef he hain't thar in ther early mornin' when I goes, I sees him in ther evenin' late."

"I do not understand it, Mark."

"And I hain't tryin' ter understand it, Cap."

"He are thar, and I works ther mine."

"And you are not afraid?"

"Of what?"

"The ghost."

"Nary, ef he don't bother me."

"Well, I will have to leave you again to-night."

"What, hain't yer goin' ter stay no time?"

"No, I have work to do elsewhere."

"Yer horse hain't rested."

"No, but he is not very tired."

"I wanted you to go to ther mine with me and see ther ghost."

"Not this time, Mark; but another time I will," said the guide, nervously.

He did not seem to have any more appetite for his supper, and soon after arose to go.

Taking his saddle and bridle, he went out to his horse and found the animal quietly grazing.

But his mane and tail had been braided while he had been in the cabin.

"Ther witches is abroad, cap'n," said Miner Mark.

"Yes; but I must be off, Mark, so work hard while I am gone and get all the dust you can for me."

"Fer ther gal yer means?"

"Yes."

"I'll be squar' in ther divey with ther poor gal, though I might hedge a leetle on my own side, were it a man I were working with on pardnership."

"Good-by, cap'n," and the old miner watched the guide as he rode away from the cabin and disappeared in the gloom.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE HAUNTED MINER.

AFTER watching the departure of the guide, Miner Mark turned toward his cabin, muttering as he went along:

"Now, thet are strange."

"Ther cap'n evidently come here ter stay a few days, and yit he got off after hearin' my story, as though he were skeert."

"He hev a narve o' iron, and I never heerd any one say he c'u'd be skeert afore; but ef he didn't kinder wilt ter-night, I are ignorant o' what wiltin' are."

"Waal, we'll see when he comes ag'in what are ther matter."

"Now, he hev tuk ther road ter Lost Hope City, and I does believe I will jist foller him, jist ter see what are goin' on in thet deserted town."

"Now, he were so hurried ter git off, thet I didn't tell him I hed rid down thar one night an' seen a ghost thar on horseback."

"But I'll see ef ther ghost shows itself to ther cap'n ter-night."

He walked on rapidly now, got his saddle and bridle, locked the door, and was soon mounted upon his horse, following after the guide.

The animal had been ugly enough before, but now, without an atom of mane, and with only a shaven stump for a tail, he was certainly an odd-looking beast.

Riding on rapidly the miner came in sight of the guide, just as he reached the deserted town.

Warpeth Will had been riding slowly, but as he entered the town, he urged his horse into a gallop.

He had passed perhaps a dozen houses, when suddenly out from behind one darted a white horse and rider.

He was hardly fifty feet in front of Mark, the Miner, who, seeing that the specter had not been discovered by the guide, gave a loud shout of warning.

Warpeth Will heard the cry, turned quickly, and, beholding the specter form of horse and rider, drove his spurs into the flanks of his steed and bounded away like the wind.

"Waal thet ghost are too much fer ther cap'n, thet are sart'in."

"He hev run like a deer, but I'll foller an' see ef Death on a pale horse overtakes him."

It was not so easy, however, for the miner to keep his determination, for his own horse would not go fast.

"Yer hes ther devil in yer, yer is bewitched or yer hes been rid ter death by ther witches," cried Mark, trying to urge his horse on.

But it was of no use, for Warpeth Will and the pursuing phantom went flying through the deserted town and disappeared down the valley.

Then Miner Mark drew rein and listened.

"Thar are but the sound o' one horse runnin' thar, that are sart'in."

"Waal, I hev hed enough o' this, so I'll jist git back ter ther cabin and take it easy."

"Ef ther cap'n don't tarn up ag'in, then I are in luck, fer ther mine belongs ter me, an' ef he does, I might as well put a bullet in him and git all ther dust, instead o' a part o' it."

With this reflection of a murderous character, the miner turned his horse about and started back toward his cabin.

As he arrived at the place where he fastened his horse, he said:

"I guess I'll jist drop over to ther mine, an' see ef my ghost thar are ther one who were on ther white horse, takin' a ride fer his health."

Staking his horse out, Miner Mark went across the little stream to the mine.

There he discovered the ghost, slowly pacing to and fro in front of the mine.

"Waal, he have not been off carousin', that are sart'in," he said.

"But I'll not disturb him," and with this he turned back, retracing his way to the cabin.

Picking up his saddle and bridle, where he had thrown them, he walked on to the cabin, and then seemed suddenly startled.

He certainly had locked the door, and yet now he found it unlocked.

"Waal, ghosts is out this night fer sart'in," he muttered, and opening the door he stepped into the cabin.

Down dropped the saddle and bridle, and he stood like a statue.

For a moment he seemed unable to speak, and then he said:

"Waal, pard, is you ther devil hisself, or his ghost?"

It was no wonder that he asked the question, for calmly seated in front of the fire was what appeared to be a man, enveloped in a fiery red mantle, strangely resembling a shroud.

The face of the stranger suddenly turned upon the miner, and he saw that it was that of a boy.

The face was white, haggard, the eyes sunken but bright, and it looked really like the face of the dead.

Rising slowly the red-robed form moved toward the door.

He looked straight at the miner, yet seemed not to see him.

Quickly the miner stepped to one side and allowed him to pass, and out into the darkness sped the strange youth.

"Waal, thet are ther boy the cap'n spoke of, and he have tained inter a red ghost."

"They seems peaceable enough though, and, so long as they doesn't hurt me, then I are content ter remain here and dig dust."

"I guess thet old Bones will suffer now, fer that red ghost do look too sickly ter walk, and he are ther one thet are ridin' ther old horse every night."

"My! but I wish I were well out o' this, fer it are a haunted kentry and no mistake."

But the old miner seemed to have an iron nerve, for he rolled into his bunk and dropped to sleep without seeming dread of his ghostly visitants.

In the morning he awoke and Bones, as he called his horse, did seem to have been hard ridden.

After leading him to the brook to water, and cooking his breakfast, the miner started for the mine.

The ghost was not there, so he went to work with a will.

He struck a rich lead, and was so engrossed in his work that he did not leave off until the darkness prevented him from seeing longer to pick out the gold from the dirt.

"Waal, I hev did a big day's work, that are sart'in," he said, and after gathering his diggings into a bag he started for the cabin.

It was quite dark when he arrived, and he felt his way toward the hearth to make a fire, when suddenly he was in a grasp of iron.

The miner was a strong man, but he could not throw off the grip upon him; and after an instant ceased to struggle, as he said:

"Fightin' ghosts hain't no use, so I let up, pards, fer I knows thar is more than one o' ye, tho' I doesn't see yer."

Hardly had he uttered the words when a flash of vivid light shot up from the hearth, then another and another, and the interior of the cabin was revealed to the now thoroughly-alarmed miner, for he beheld that which was enough to drive him mad with fright.

CHAP ER XXVI. THE MINER'S MISSION.

WHAT Miner Mark saw by the flashes of light in the cabin was enough to frighten the stoutest heart, as I have said.

The flashes momentarily revealed a terrible sight, and then all was darkness again.

In one corner of the fire-place the miner had seen the youth, or rather what he called the "Red Ghost."

In the other corner was the white-robed being he had seen at the mine.

Grasping his arms as though they were in a vise was a third form, and it was robed in deep black.

The last was tall, and that, if ghost it was, it was most powerful, the miner had had reason to know.

When darkness came again Miner Mark was silent, and the stillness that followed was painful.

"Pard speerits, I sh'u'd hev got out o' this ther fu'st night I discovered thet this kentry were ha'nted," said the miner, breaking the awful silence.

"Man, you are in the presence of those that can curse your soul forever."

"Be silent!"

The voice of the white-robed form—he who spoke—was deep and sepulchral, and the miner shivered; but he answered, in spite of the warning:

"Jist tarn me loose out o' thet door, give me my old stump-tailed horse, and tell me good-by, and durned ef yer'll ever see me here ag'in."

"Jist try me."

"Man, we intend to try you."

"You have a chance to save your soul," said the white-robed specter.

"How can it be did, pard?"

"Do my bidding."

"I'll do it."

"Perform faithfully the task I order you to do, and all will go well; but fail me, and, night and day, sleeping or waking, you shall be haunted through life by grim phantoms."

"I'll do as yer tells me."

"Make no mistake."

"You bet I don't," eagerly said the miner.

"Will you swear to obey my bidding?"

"Yes, Ghost, on a stack o' Bibles so high old Bones can't jump over 'em."

"I will trust you."

With this the flashes again came from the fire-place, and the miner saw the red and white-robed forms arise and approach him.

In the darkness that followed he could not see, but he felt their cold hands laid upon him, and then, in the same deep, sepulchral voice he was asked several questions, and to them he returned prompt replies.

Then the duty he was to perform was made known to him, and he was told to go.

"I am off," he cried eagerly.

"Remember, if you fail, your fate will be an awful one."

"I'll do what yer says," cried the miner, and gathering up his bridle and saddle, he dashed out of the cabin, and five minutes after was riding rapidly away from the dread spot.

Old Bones was certainly made to suffer that trip, for he was given no rest through the night, but halted at sunrise, when the miner felt that he was driving him too hard.

A rest of an hour, with water and grass, revived Bones immensely, and he was put at it again, and held to the gait he started in until noon, when another halt of an hour was made.

"Come, Bones, we must git on ag'in, fer we is doin' errands fer ghosts now, and I hain't one ter tarry," said Miner Mark, and he kept the horse pushing ahead until he staggered and fell dead on the trail.

"Waal, you hev give up, Bones, but I doesn't dare ter," and shouldering his saddle and bridle, the miner started on the way afoot.

He soon passed his old cabin, where the guide had visited him, and an hour after was entering Salt Lake City.

Straight to the Mormon Legion head-quarters he went, and his eyes fell upon a form he well knew.

"Ho, Cap!" he called out.

It was Warpath Will, the guide, and he started at sight of the miner.

Mark called him to one side and held an earnest whispered conversation with him.

"But, Mark, I am to be married in two days," urged the guide.

"Put thet off, pard, ef yer wishes ter save ther mine."

"But, Mark—"

"Pard, I tell yer thet ther mine are too valuable ter lose, and ef yer delays, yer'll find other occupants thar when yer goes."

"But I can drive them out."

"Yer kin drive nothin', fer ther hills is gittin' full o' miners, and you'll jist be set aside mighty quick."

"Go to yer mine, be thar when they comes in, and yer'll hold ther fort and no mistake."

"But jist wait until they gits thar and yer'll lose it."

"You are doubtless right, Mark."

"I know I is, and, arter yer hes made friends with the miners, yer kin leave ther mine with me ter work it, and come back here and git married."

"You say well, Mark, so I will go."

"We will start to-night."

"No, I are clean played out, fer, as I said, I kilt Bones a-comin', and walked the rest o' ther way."

"I hes a leetle biz ter settle up too, while I are here, so will come on arter yer in a couple o' days, ready ter go ter work in ther mine."

"I hate ter go alone."

"What is yer afereed of, Cap?"

"Have you seen anything more of your ghosts?"

"Ghosts be blowed! what does I keer fer ghosts?"

"They do not trouble you then, Mark?"

"No sir, Cap."

"Well, I will start to-night," and several hours after, just at dark, the guide rode out of Salt Lake City on his way to the Haunted Mine.

He seemed not in the best of spirits, as he rode along, and the light still reflected from the western skies, showed his face to wear an anxious look.

It certainly would have appeared more anxious had he known that two persons were following upon his trail.

CHAPTER XXVII. RETRIBUTION.

THE sun was yet two hours high, when Warpath Will rode into Lost Hope City.

Not a human being was in sight, and glancing over to the little burying-ground he failed to see there the ghostly form, which he had seen when with poor Cleone.

Anxiously he looked from the right to the left, but no one met his vision.

"From what Mark told me I expected to find this place full of miners," he muttered, as he held on his way up the valley toward the Haunted Mine.

"I don't half-like this," he continued, "staying all night in that cabin; but I am in for it."

At last the cabin was reached, and all looked serene there.

He staked his horse out, carried plenty of wood into the cabin, so as to keep a bright light all night, and then cooked his supper.

He seemed strangely nervous and ill at ease.

For some time he paced the cabin floor, and then

with a muttered imprecation, caused by thoughts, he threw off his outer clothing, took more wood upon the fire, and laid down upon the bunk which had been the bed of Don Marsden.

For awhile he was restless, and then turning his face to the wall he seemed to sink to sleep, because his breathing became hard and regular.

Suddenly the bunk which had been occupied by Guy Marsden moved.

Out from behind it arose a tall, black-robed form. Then another in white, and a third in red.

Softly toward the sleeping man the black specter glided and his belt of arms was removed from the peg where they hung within reach of his arm.

Then the rude chair and bench in the cabin were placed before the fire, but facing the bunk of the sleeper, and the three phantoms seated themselves upon it.

Then Warpath Will moved uneasily.

He seemed to feel their presence, and, with a startled cry, as though in a troubled dream, he half-sprung out of his bed.

Then his eyes fell upon the three terrible forms confronting him.

The black-robed form's face was entirely covered; but the other two were visible.

In the one in white he beheld the face of Don Marsden, with the red wound on his forehead.

In the face of the one in red he saw Guy Marsden, the Boy Miner.

Like one whose brain had become crazed, the guide glared upon the specters, and then from his lips broke the cry:

"Don Marsden's ghost! Guy Marsden's ghost! And you, you! black phantom from the tomb, who are you?"

"Bitterly am I punished, for I am going mad!"

"Warpath Will, you deserve your punishment," said the white-robed form in sepulchral tones.

"You are a base Mormon outlaw, and you became guide for the emigrant train to lead it to destruction."

"You left it on an excuse to visit a friend's ranch, and came here to kill me, that you might return, take the life of my boy, and then make my beautiful daughter your wife."

"You struck me down with deadly intent, you returned and told lies to my wife and children, you pretended to sacrifice yourself to save them from the Mormon captain, when you are none other than he, Captain Champion, yourself."

"You killed my loved wife, when a few more days only and she would have died without your cruel act, and you left your hirelings to kill my son."

"Then you came hither with my daughter, and from here took her to your Mormon home, where Heaven only knows what has been her fate."

"For these crimes, Warpath Will, you deserve a death by torture, and, such mercy as you have shown it shall be shown to you."

A wild shriek broke from the lips of the terror-stricken man, and he fell his full length upon the cabin floor.

CHAPTER XXVIII. A STRANGE STORY.

HARDLY had Warpath Will fallen upon the floor of the little cabin, when the sound of hoofs was heard without.

The three specters started, and soon there came a knock at the cabin door.

"Who are you?" asked the white-robed form.

"I are Miner Mark back ag'in," was the reply.

"Alone?"

"Jist here I am alone; but thar are one who waits not far off fer me."

"Enter!"

In obedience, there entered the cabin the old miner.

He looked pale and haggard, and glanced anxiously around the cabin at the three spectral-looking beings.

Then his eyes fell upon the form of Warpath Will, and he said:

"He got here."

"Yes."

"Dead?"

Without answering, the specter asked:

"Did you obey my bidding in everything?"

"Yes."

"Where is the one whom you brought with you?"

"Waiting down by the brook."

"Go there, and send the one who awaits you, here at once."

"Then mount your horse, and do not draw rein until dawn."

"I hears yer, speerit."

"Will you obey?"

"You bet!"

"If you venture into these wilds again, or if you send any one here, woe be unto you."

"I'll keep off, and I hev nothin' ter do with other folks."

"Begone!"

The miner darted out of the door, and as he disappeared, the three specters were suddenly metamorphosed into Don Marsden, Guy Marsden, and the Heathen Chinee, all appearing in proper person, as soon as their black, white and red robes were thrown aside.

At the same time the sound of hoof-falls was heard without, and they hastily left the cabin.

A horse and rider was seen approaching, and but a dozen paces away.

Hastening forward Don Marsden cried eagerly:

"My child! my beautiful daughter!"

"Father!" and with a bound Cleone was in her father's arms.

Some moments she remained with her head
 on his shoulder, and then he said:
 "Here is your noble brother, Cleone."
 The brother and sister were at once locked in a
 loving embrace, and then Don Marsden said:
 "Cleone, to this man we owe our lives."
 He turned to the Chinese, who said:
 "Muchee gladee do goodee."
 "Gladee see 'Melican gal."
 Cleone grasped his hand and thanked him most
 warmly, and the four walked toward the cabin.
 "Ha! that man is gone," cried Don Marsden, as
 he saw that Warpath Will had disappeared.
 "Me catchee," cried China, and he started off in
 pursuit, while Don Marsden ushered his daughter
 into the cabin, followed by Guy, who looked pale and
 sick.
 "You must know, father, that I come to you
 alone, for mother is not with me," sadly said
 Cleone, as the three took seats before the fire.
 "I know all, my child, for Guy here returned for
 you and found his mother's grave."
 "He was captured by the Mormon outlaw band
 under Red Champion, shot, and left for dead; but
 that Chinese saved his life, and nursed him back to
 almost health again."
 "Who is the Chinese, father?"
 "A poor fellow who killed a miner, in self-defense,
 and feared to go again among them."
 "He has lived in the deserted camp of Lost Hope
 City, since the miners left the place; but before
 that hid away in a large board monument, which
 was erected over a popular miner who died."
 "He ingeniously put hinges on one side of the
 monument, and slept inside, not one ever suspecting
 that such a thing was possible."
 "He dressed in white, and played ghost, and I be-
 lieve that was one reason why Lost Hope City was
 deserted so suddenly."
 "But to tell you of myself."
 "That man, Red Champion, came here, pre-
 tended to come from you, and, trusted by me he
 tried to shoot me; but his pistol failed to explode,
 and, when I turned upon him, he dealt me a blow here
 —see the scar—that felled me like dead."
 "Then he carried me to the river and threw me
 in."
 "The water revived me, and I struck out for the
 shore, I suppose, for there I was found the next day
 by the Chinese."
 "I know nothing of what followed, until some
 days ago; but he nursed me back to life, and then I
 ran away from him, for I was crazed by the blow."
 "In searching for me he came upon Guy in the
 hands of the outlaws, and brought him to Lost
 Hope City, and nursed him as tenderly as you could
 have done, all the time playing ghost, mounted
 upon a white horse, with muffled hoofs, to scare an
 old miner from the country."
 "Again he came across me, watching my mine,
 and half-dead, and taking me to Lost Hope City
 once more, I came face to face with Guy, and lo!
 my reason returned to me."
 "Then we talked over all that had happened, and
 were determined to rescue you."
 "Red Champion at that time came here, but es-
 caped us, so that we played ghost on the old miner,
 and frightened him into doing our bidding, which
 was to get the villain back here again."
 "This he did, and we gave him a terrible fright,
 only he has escaped us."
 "We also told the miner to bring you here, and,
 thank Heaven, he has done so."
 "Now, my child, you know all, so let us have your
 story!"
 "It is soon told, father," and Cleone made known
 the adventures that befell her mother and herself,
 after the departure of her brother, and then how
 she had come to the cabin, and, after waiting for
 days, had gone on to Salt Lake City.
 She told of how she had pledged herself to War-
 path Will, when she had discovered the fate of her
 father and brother, and how nobly he had acted
 toward her.
 She had at last set a day when she was to become
 his wife, though she did not love him, for she had
 given up all hope of ever seeing them alive again.
 Then the old miner had come to her, and told her
 he could lead her to those who waited to see her,
 and feeling that it was her father and brother, she
 had accompanied him.
 "Oh, my child, what have you not escaped, to
 have been saved from that villain?" cried Don
 Marsden.
 "What villain, father?" innocently asked Cleone.
 "That Mormon wretch, who would have made
 you his wife."
 "Oh, father, can he be a Mormon?"
 "A Mormon, child? Why, he is an outlaw as
 well, for, as you seem not to know him as he is, I
 will tell you that the man from whom you have
 been saved is none other than the Red Champion!"
 "No, no, father—it cannot be!" cried Cleone, in
 dire distress.
 "It is true, Cleone, for he it was who was the guide
 of your train, and while pretending to save you led
 you to destruction."
 "He it was who caused your mother's death, tried
 to kill me, believed that his hirelings, according to
 his orders, had slain your mother and then sought
 to destroy you."
 "But what was his purpose, my dear father?"
 asked Cleone, in a dazed kind of way.
 "His purpose was to make you his wife, and to
 get possession of the rich gold-mine we have
 found."
 "Yes, and he well-nigh succeeded," said Guy,
 sternly.
 "He did, indeed; but what have we not to be
 thankful for?" said Cleone.

"We have certainly been blessed, after all of our
 sorrows, my children, and we owe our preservation
 to our noble Chinese friend, whom I love as though
 he were my brother— Oh, here he is!" and, as Don
 Marsden spoke, China entered the cabin, a disap-
 pointed look upon his face, as he said:
 "No catchee! Maybe comee again, then catchee
 and killee quick."

CONCLUSION.

Mr. DON MARSDEN, after the sorrows and misfor-
 tunes he had known, under the influence of his
 children's presence, rapidly became restored to
 health, and worked diligently in his mine, while
 Guy also quickly regained his former strength, and
 became the hunter of the little party.
 China chopped wood, worked in the mine, and did
 odd chores to help Cleone, who looked after the
 culinary department, and many were the good din-
 ners she gave them.
 The new cabin, or "Mansion," as Mr. Marsden
 called it, was soon completed, and made a most de-
 lightful home there in that wild wilderness.
 For a year or more Mr. Marsden worked his mine,
 though now and then troubled by the Mormon out-
 laws, and then, with his children and China set out
 to return to his old Kentucky home and enjoy the
 wealth which he had so well earned by the perilous
 life he had led in the Rockies during his search for
 gold.

THE END.

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